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MAN'S DAY

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The World and its God

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PREFACE

THE writer has spent by far the greater part of his life in full sympathy with all the aims and ideals of "Man's Day." He knows full well the power those aims and ideals exert over the hearts and minds even of the excellent of the earth. It is the power of the strong man, wherewith he keeps his goods in peace [a]—a power that is all the greater because it is, like him who exercises it, spiritual in its nature, and is exercised through invisible agencies. For such as are controlled by it there can be no deliverance save through the One who is stronger than the strong man, the One who came to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound.[b]

Among the strong delusions of these times there is none stronger than that Man's Day is a day of

[a] Luke xi. 21. [b] Luke iv. 18.

glorious achievement, successive triumphs, and continuous progress; and that by the forces operating in it mankind is eventually to be brought to a condition of universal blessedness and contentment. The writer knows full well that those who are under the influence of this delusion cannot be freed from it by arguments, however cogent, or by statistics showing the appalling increase of crime, accidents, suicides, and insanity, or by the open and flagrant manifestations of corruption, lawlessness, and profligacy. To all these appeals they resolutely close their ears and eyes, not willing to recognize the real drift and certain end of what is called "civilization."

But far more potent than human arguments and reasonings, and more powerful than the evidence of the senses, is the testimony of the Word of God. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word." There is yet a power in that Word before which the mightiest strongholds must go down; and the reader of this volume is asked to listen, not to the opinions of a man—however well considered they might be, and however well qualified he might be to form them—but to what the Word of God says concerning the real character of the age in

which we are living, and concerning the real nature of the forces that are operating to produce what is going on in the world.

The state of those who are held by the prevailing views regarding Man's Day is a state of bondage; and their release cannot be effected by ordinary means, such as might suffice, for example, to convince one of the error of supposing that the earth is flat. Theirs is a case requiring, not argument, but testimony; and not testimony of an ordinary kind which might be questioned as to either its credibility, or its weight, or its competence, but testimony of the very highest sort, which cannot be questioned on these or on any grounds. Manifestly such testimony can come only from God Himself. But He has measured the need and gauged the necessities of the case; and He has, in marvellous grace, condescended to give His own personal testimony about these things. Wherever and whenever conviction has been wrought in the soul of man concerning the great facts of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, that result has been produced by this Divine testimony. Our problem and our part in it is, not to produce the conviction by the cogency of our arguments, and certainly it is not to get praise to ourselves as

"defenders of the faith" (which stands in no need of our puny defence), but only to persuade men to listen to the testimony. To this end we must speak the truth in love, ever bearing in mind that while God hates a lie and every false system, He loves and pities those who are deceived thereby, and has given His own Son to effect their deliverance. We readily receive and act upon the witness of men in all the practical affairs of our lives. Even the witness of untrustworthy and deceitful man has in it yet some convincing power. The witness of God, therefore, which is greater than that of man, has power to break the bands of error and falsehood, and to set the captives free.

> "If we receive the witness of men" (which we all do) "the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son."[a]

It seems to the writer that the reason why so little result is accomplished by the books that are written

[a] 1 John v. 9, 10.

in behalf of the truth of Scripture is that the writers thereof fail to take God's views of the character of unbelief, and hence they enter the lists as controversialists, relying upon the force of argument, instead of realizing the necessity and the power of God's testimony. It is to that testimony that the writer asks attention. The subject itself cannot fail to be of great interest to every thoughtful mind, whatever his convictions may be. It must be a matter of interest to everyone to know what was said and written nearly two thousand years ago concerning the times in which he is living; and when that record is studied and compared with the state of the world to-day, it will be very hard indeed to resist the conclusion that only the mind of the Infinite could have been its source.

PHILIP MAURO.

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MAN'S DAY

"But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or of MAN'S DAY." 1 Cor. iv. 3 (see marg.).

PART I

THIS AGE AND OTHER AGES

It is our present purpose to consider the prominent characteristics of this age in which we are living, and to inquire into their significance. This inquiry will be conducted under the light of the Word of God, and in dependence upon Divine guidance. If it be thus conducted, we may confidently expect that it will be fruitful in result to the glory of God and to the edification of the body of Christ.

God has certain definite purposes to be accomplished, certain parts of His vast work of redemption to be worked out, in this age; and until these parts of

His plan have been completed, the age cannot come to an end. These mighty purposes are being accomplished in the energy of the Holy Spirit, and His operations impart to the age some of its characteristics.

On the other hand, the great forces of evil, under the superb leadership of the head of the principalities, powers, and world-rulers of this darkness,[a] are directed to the accomplishment of certain definite objects, directly opposed to the purposes of God. The display and exercise of these stupendous spiritual energies likewise impart to the age some of its pronounced characteristics.

These two spiritual forces, which are operating in the world and through human beings in this age, are directly opposed to each other; and in the ensuing conflict lies the explanation of all that is mysterious and puzzling in human affairs.

As the age draws on to its consummation, the conflict deepens in intensity, and it develops, as foretold in the Scriptures, new features and phases. The campaign of evil is conducted with craft and subtlety; and in the last desperate struggles for continued possession of the field, the boldest deceptions are practised, and the operations of the Holy

[a] Eph. vi. 12.

Spirit are imitated in such a way as to deceive multitudes. Satan's ministers are disguised as ministers of righteousness, and address the people as such, and in language in which it is often difficult to detect the lie.[a] "Seducing spirits" successfully palm themselves off upon the unwary, using, it may be, a testimony to the speedy coming of Christ to gain the confidence of their intended victim, and to establish the desired "control" over him. And so, giving heed to these, some have departed from the faith, and have yielded themselves to the "possession" of seducing spirits. How clearly we have been warned of these "perilous times" that were to come (and now have come) "in last days" of this age![b] for of these very happenings the Spirit has spoken "expressly." "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons."[c]

Consideration of this weighty subject is therefore most timely; and we have need to seek, with all diligence of soul, and with prayer and supplication in the Spirit, to ascertain what the oracles of God have to say concerning it. Never was it more

[a] 2 Cor. xi. 15. [b] 2 Tim. iii. 1. [c] 1 Tim. iv. 1.

important than now that the child of God should be able to discern the signs of the times; and never was it more important than now that he should understand the character of the conflict that is going on in this age, the character of the spiritual forces engaged, and the purposes and methods employed by them respectively in their accomplishment. Ignorance touching these things creates a situation of great peril to the believer. Such being the case, we may be sure that the Spirit of Truth is desirous of guiding us into the truth, which it is so needful for us to know, concerning the characteristics of this age of ours.

But some will ask at the outset just what is meant by "this age." It is a question calling for a clear and comprehensive answer; and the presentation of the answer will bring into view much important truth which is very pertinent to the general subject.

The "age" is often referred to in ordinary conversation and in current literature. Nearly always it is mentioned in terms of admiration, as a "progressive age," an "enlightened age," "a scientific age," an "age of invention," and the like. But in such current expressions the word "age" has no very definite meaning. In Scripture, however, the word

"age" means a definite period of time, having a definite beginning and a definite ending. The words "age," "ages," "this present age" (the latter being the expression we are especially interested in) occur many times in the New Testament; and there is contained in the Scriptures as a whole a plan or scheme of the series of earth-ages (or "dispensations," as they are sometimes called) sufficiently well defined to be clearly discerned by the diligent student of the Word of God.

Unfortunately, however, this plan of the ages has been obscured somewhat; and erroneous impressions have been given to many readers of the Bible, owing to the circumstance that the Greek word meaning "age" is generally translated in our common version by the word "world." Thus in several passages we read in our version of "the end of the world." The teaching which the writer received as a child, and which was based upon these passages, was to the effect that the world (or earth) was some day to come to a complete and violent end, in a fearful catastrophe, in which fire and brimstone, and the rending of rocks, and melting of the firmament with fervent heat, were to be prominent features. If, however, we read "age" instead of "world" in these passages, a very

different idea is conveyed. Thus, what our Lord said in Matt. xiii. 39 is: "The harvest is the end of the age." What His disciples asked Him in Matt. xxiv. 3 was for the sign of His coming and of the end of the age. When about to leave them, to be gone in person throughout the entire age, at the end of which He is to return in person, He wished to assure His own that nevertheless He would be with them in spirit during this entire period of absence; so He said: "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age."[a]

The Bible shows that the course of God's dealings with the earth and with fallen man does not flow on uninterruptedly and with uniform characteristics; but is divided up into successive periods, each distinguished from the other by some features peculiar to itself, although all have much in common. These great divisions of time, which constitute successive stages of God's redemptive work, are called "ages" or "dispensations." They are also frequently called "days," as the "day of salvation," the "day of the Lord," the "day of Christ," the "day of judgment," the "day of vengeance," and so forth. The ages are thus distinguished one from

[a] Matt. xxviii. 20.

another; and, as will be shown later on, the present age has characteristics of a very striking nature, distinguishing it in a marked way from the ages which have preceded it and from those which are to follow.

A knowledge of this Divine plan of the ages, and of the prominent characteristics of each age, furnishes to the student of God's Word a great help to the comprehension of it as a Divinely planned organic whole. The Holy Scriptures have a structure, exhibiting, when seen and comprehended even imperfectly, the same perfection of wisdom in design and of skill in execution that characterizes all His glorious and wonderful works.

On the other hand, without a knowledge of the dispensational divisions of the course of time, and of the chief peculiarities of each dispensation, the Scriptures must appear a confused and incoherent mass, put together without regard to any definite plan or method of arrangement. It is, therefore, of great importance that we should preface our consideration of the characteristics of our own age by a reference to the entire series of the earth-ages, and a brief description of the characteristics of each.

In Eph. iii. 11, we have the expression: "According to the purpose of the ages, which He purposed

in Christ Jesus our Lord"; and in Heb. xi. 3: "By faith we understand that the ages were framed by the Word of God." These passages speak of a series of ages of indefinite number.

In Eph. iii. 3–5, Paul is communicating a secret, or "mystery," which had been made known to him first, of all human beings, namely, the mystery of the Church, the one body of Christ; and he says concerning this secret that "in other ages" it was not made known unto the sons of men. From this passage we learn that there were other ages preceding this age. Also in 1 Cor. x. 11, the Apostle says of the experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness that these things happened unto them for types, and are written for our admonition, upon whom "the ends of the ages" (not "ends of the world") have come.

In Eph. ii. 7, we read of something that God is going to do "in the ages to come." We thus learn that there is a number of ages to follow the present age. This age will come to its end when God shall have accomplished the particular part of His plan which He has assigned to it; and then another age will begin, the character of His dealings with the world undergoing the predestined change.

These coming ages stretch out in an endless vista,

and during each of them God will doubtless be doing some new thing to the praise of His glory. In Eph. iii. 21, we have this far look into the future, in the words which, literally translated, ascribe glory to Him in the Church in Christ Jesus "to all the generations of the age of the ages." Our concern, however, is not with the endless ages of eternity, but with the earth-ages, in which God is accomplishing His great work of redemption. These earth-ages are limited, and we have reason to believe that they are six in number.

In Heb. ix. 26, we read that now once in the end of the age (A.V. "world") Christ has appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It is at once apparent that the age spoken of in this passage is not the present age, but the preceding age, the age of the law, or the age of Israel. This brings before us the important truth that the earthly life of our Lord does not fall in our age at all. "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (the Jewish patriarchs).[a] Christians are prone to forget that Christ was a Jew, and that His earthly mission was to that people

[a] Rom. xv. 8.

alone. He was not sent, save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He was "made under the law,"[a] whereas we are not in the age of law, but in that of grace. The earthly life of Christ, therefore, does not fall in our age. His crucifixion was what practically closed up the Jewish age, although the patience and long-suffering of God were displayed, in that, even at Pentecost and after, the Kingdom was still preached to the Jews, and an opportunity was again given them to repent and accept their Messiah. After their repeated rejection of this offer, emphasised in the stoning of Stephen, the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom was suspended (to be resumed in the succeeding age); and the present dispensation, which is an unpredicted parenthesis in the age of Israel, was brought in. One characteristic of this age is the preaching, not the Gospel of the Kingdom of the heavens, but the Gospel of the Grace of God: to wit, forgiveness of sins and eternal life as the free gift of God to all who believe on His crucified Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, whom God has raised from the dead, and exalted to His own right hand, there awaiting until His enemies shall be made a footstool for His feet.

[a] Gal. iv. 4.

THE COMING MILLENNIAL AGE

While the "ages to come" are referred to in the passages already quoted, there are other references to a special age to come. Thus, in Eph. i. 21, Christ is said to be exalted above every name that is named "not only in this age, but also in that which is to come." (In both these passages the A.V. employs the word "world"). This is the Millennial age, or day of righteousness, of which so much is said in both Old and New Testaments. The same age is apparently referred to in Peter's discourse in Acts iii. 21, as "the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." He there refers to Christ as He whom the heavens must receive until those times of restitution. When those times arrive, Christ will come visibly out of the heavens.[a]

It appears from our Lord's words in Luke xx. 35, in replying to the catch-question put to Him by the Sadducees, that the resurrection from among the dead (that is, the first resurrection) belonged to an

[a] Rev. xix. 11.

age then future. This verse, literally rendered, reads:—

> "But those accounted worthy to obtain that age, and the resurrection which is from among the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage."

There are many descriptions of this coming age in the Old Testament prophecies, particularly in Isaiah.

THE COMING AGE OF JUDGMENT

ANOTHER future age to which the Bible makes frequent reference is the age of the judgments of God in the earth. Isaiah speaks of this age when he says: "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."[a] This age of judgments is usually referred to in Scripture as "the day of judgment," or the "day of the Lord."

In Joel ii. 31, it is called "the great and terrible day of the Lord." In Ezek. vii. 19 and Rev. vi. 17, it is called "the day of wrath."

In Jeremiah xxx. 7, it is said of this coming age of judgments: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble."

In Isaiah xiii. 9, the prominent characteristics of this future age are stated thus: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and He shall

[a] Isa. xxvi. 9.

destroy the sinners thereof out of it." See also verses 10 and 11, and compare with Joel i. and ii.

In several passages this time of judgments is called "the day of vengeance." For example, in Isa. xxxiv. 8 we read: "For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance." See also Isa. lxi. 2 and lxiii. 4.

From Isa. lxi. 1–3, it is evident that this day of vengeance follows the preaching of the Gospel to the meek, and the opening of the prison doors to the captives (to wit, this present age); and that it in turn is followed by the period when Zion will be made a praise in the earth, her ashes will be exchanged for beauty, her mourning for the oil of joy, and her spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise.

The Book of Revelation also shows very clearly that the day of judgment, or day of the Lord, comes between this present age (the day of grace) and the millennial age, or day of Christ's personal reign upon earth.

The events of this coming day or age of judgments begin at the fourth chapter of Revelation and extend to (and include) the nineteenth, in which that day is ended in the visible appearing of Christ in power and glory, overthrowing His enemies who are gathered to

oppose Him, as prophesied in the second Psalm (verses 2–6). The millennial age follows in chapter xx. The order of these ages is, therefore, as follows: 1. The present day of grace; 2. the day of judgment; 3. the day of Christ's kingdom on earth, or the millennium.

I call special attention to this sequence of the ages, because there is a very general impression among Christians that our age is to be followed immediately by the millennial age. There is a tendency to overlook, or to reduce to a very short period, the day of judgment which is to intervene. But an attentive study of the Scriptures which speak of this interval between the removal of the Church of Christ to meet the Lord in the air[a] and the coming of Christ with His saints in glory[b] will show that it will be a period of extended duration. Many and great events are to transpire in that age. Nations are to rise; ancient cities to be rebuilt; the Jews are to be re-established in their own land and become a great people; the temple is to be rebuilt, and temple ritual resumed; the apostasy and rebellion of man is to reach a climax in the worship of the man of sin, "that

[a] 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17; John xiv. 3.
[b] 2 Thess. i. 7, 8; ii. 8; Rev. xix. 11.

Wicked . . . whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."[a] The length of this next ensuing age—the day of judgment—has not been revealed to us, but enough has been said about it in Scripture to show that it will be an extended period.

We have, then, immediately preceding our age, the day of Israel, or the day of the law; then the present age, the day of salvation, or "man's day"; and then immediately succeeding this, the day of judgment, or the day of the Lord; and after that the millennial age.

[a] 2 Thess. ii. 8.

SCRIPTURAL DESIGNATIONS OF THIS PRESENT AGE

Let us refer at this point to the names by which the present age is designated in Scripture. Each one of these designations is a study in itself, and we shall not attempt to do more than give a mere indication of the significance of each.

"Man's Day."—In 1 Cor. iv. 3 the Apostle says: "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment" (Gr. "day"; see *marg.*). The word here translated "judgment" is, wherever else it occurs, rendered "day," which is its meaning. It is the same word used in the parallel expression in Rev. i. 10, and there correctly rendered "the Lord's day." This expression "man's day" is full of significance, and is a marvellously apt designation of this era of man's achievements. We will not now go into that; but what is here to be specially noted is that, in 1 Cor. iv., man's day is put in contrast with the day of judgment. Paul there says that to him it is the smallest matter that he should be examined or judged by man's day (which is really night, and not

day at all); and he goes on to say: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come." When the Lord comes, as we have already seen, the day of judgment begins, and then there will be light by which everything can be examined.

But in the meantime man is setting himself up as a judge of everything and everybody, notably of God and His Word. "Higher Criticism," so-called, is peculiarly a characteristic development of man's day.

The expression "man's day" is in contrast with the expression "Lord's day" in Rev. i. 10, which I take to mean, not Sunday (which is never so called in Scripture) but the day of the Lord. This view of Rev. i. 10 gives the true Scriptural sequence—namely, first, man's day, then the Lord's day; "first, that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual."[a] Man first has his day. He is allowed to occupy the stage, and to work out unhindered his own schemes. Then comes the Lord's day, in which the results of man's untrammelled doings will be examined in the light, the hidden things of darkness will be brought into plain view, and the counsels of the heart will be made manifest.[b]

The first reference in Scripture to the day of the

[a] 1 Cor. xv. 46. [b] 1 Cor. iv. 5.

Lord marks this contrast with great emphasis. This first occurrence of the expression is in Isaiah ii. 12: "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day; for the DAY OF THE LORD OF HOSTS shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low."[a]

In view of this certain end to Man's Day, it is plain that those who are labouring simply to "elevate humanity" and to "uplift the masses," are working either in ignorance or in defiance of God's purposes.

"This Darkness." — This designation of the present age occurs in Eph. vi. 12 (R.V.), and is manifestly akin to that last considered. The special truth which it embodies is set forth in many passages. In Heb. x. 22–25, we find an exhortation concluding with the words: "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." The believer is here viewed as a watcher in the night, eagerly looking for signs of the morning.

We have this same view of the present age in the familiar and cheering assurance of Rom. xiii. 12: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Our

[a] Isa. ii. 11, 12.

Lord also spoke of this age of darkness which was about to envelop the world, His words being recorded in John ix. 4, 5. So long as He was in the world there was light in the world. Consequently it was then day; but men extinguished that light, and darkness ensued. This darkness which fell upon the earth when the Lord of Glory was crucified will continue until the day dawns and the Day-star arises. This is the meaning of our Lord's words: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." He Himself marked the beginning of this long night when He yielded Himself to the ruler of this darkness (who had entered into Judas Iscariot), saying: "This is your hour and the power of darkness."[a]

Isaiah prophesied of the day that was to dawn in the first coming of Christ, and of the night that was to swallow it up. The questioner asks: "Watchman, what of the night?" and the answer is: "The morning cometh, and also the night."[b] Yes, the promised morning came, the bright day of promise, and Zacharias hailed the approaching visit of "the Dayspring from on high."[c] But the light

[a] Luke xxii. 53. [b] Isa. xxi. 12. [c] Luke i. 78.

was rejected, because men loved the darkness better than the light, and God gave them their choice; and "this darkness" settled down upon the earth, constituting the long night of Christ's absence.

"The Day of Salvation." — This expression occurs in 2 Cor. vi. 2, where we are told that "now is the day of salvation." The appropriateness of this designation of the present age is obvious. On the ground of Christ's finished work on the cross, where He dealt with sin to the complete satisfaction of a Holy God, salvation (remission of sins and eternal life) is now freely offered to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

"This Present Evil Age."—This designation is given in Gal. i. 4. We are there told that Christ "gave Himself for our sins, in order that He might deliver us from this present evil world (age), according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory to the ages of the ages. Amen." In this designation and in that last referred to we have respectively the two sides or aspects of the present age, that is, man's side and God's side. If God's dealings in grace make the present age pre-eminently "the day of salvation," man's doings, and his rejection of God's grace, make it "this present evil age." We will have occasion to

deal with this designation later on, and will not now dwell upon it further than to say that it is a designation of the age which detects and discloses unbelief of God in the hearts of many who profess and call themselves Christians; but who reject God's view and adopt man's view of the age—namely, that it is not an evil age, but an age of great and glorious achievements in which much good is being accomplished. God's testimony concerning the age is directly contrary to man's thoughts.

This age indeed has many things that attract the natural heart, and many people love it to their eternal loss. Demas was one of these, and his case is representative of millions of others. Paul gives us his sad record in 2 Tim. iv. 10, where we read: "Demas forsook me, having loved this present age." Oh, may we see the character of the age as God sees it, and so be saved from the consequences of cherishing any love of it in our hearts!

In Titus ii. 11–14, we are given the provision which has been made by the grace of God against the attractions of this present age, which provision consists in holding out to us the blessed hope of our Lord's coming. This hope directs our gaze beyond this age to the beginning of another age, which will

be for those who dwell on the earth the great and terrible "day of the Lord," but for those who are caught up to meet Him in the air the blessed "day of Christ."[a] By this passage in Titus we are informed that the same grace of God which brings salvation to all men also teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present age; looking, beyond this age, for that blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"The Age of this World."—This is a peculiar expression. It occurs in Eph. ii. 2. It is rendered in the A.V., "the course of this world." If the translators had been consistent in their treatment of the Greek word *aiōn* (age), they would have rendered this passage "according to the world of this world," which would be meaningless. We reserve for the present our extended comments on this very important passage. It will suffice here to note the expression, and the statement of the context, namely, that believers, before they were quickened, all walked according to the age of this world; that is to say, in accordance with its

[a] Phil. i. 6; ii. 16.

principles, aims, and aspirations. Our Lord's unqualified testimony regarding this world was "that the works thereof are evil." [a] This passage, therefore, presents the same view of the age that is given in Gal. i. 4, setting it forth as pre-eminently an evil age. We also call attention, in passing, to the special relation which Satan bears to this age, he being here described as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now (*i.e.* in this present age) worketh in the children of disobedience." We will return to this point for a fuller consideration of the deep truth here set forth.

From this review of the several designations which Scripture gives to the age in which we are living, we learn that it is not only an age marked by striking and conspicuous peculiarities; but it is also an age of great contrasts and extreme qualities of good and evil—according as it is viewed with reference to what God is doing in it, and the nature of His dealings with man; or according to what man is doing in it, and the nature of his attitude towards God.

[a] John vii. 7.

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THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES

THE earth-ages have been divided off in various ways, generally in such manner as to produce seven ages. There is, however, only one plan or scheme of the ages which can claim a Scriptural support, and this plan we unhesitatingly adopt. It is given to us in the first chapter of Genesis.

To understand the Bible, it is absolutely necessary to bear in mind that it is God's message to a fallen creature. Its aim is directly contrary to that of man's books, which (I speak of those which have a serious purpose) are written with a view to the improvement of the natural man, and are all founded upon the assumption, expressed or implied, that man has some good in him which can be developed or "educated" (*i.e.* "drawn out" of him). The Bible, on the contrary, is based upon the express principle that there is in man no good whatever, and no power or possibility of any real improvement.

The very first purpose of the Bible, then, is to show to man what his natural state actually is—that

it is a state of utter ruin and corruption; to close every mouth; and to bring in, as to every man, a verdict of "guilty before God."[a] The next purpose of the Bible is to show, to the man who has been thus convinced of sin, God's way of salvation; to show how He deals with a ruin which, so far as human power goes, is utterly irremediable.

Much of the prevailing ignorance among God's people is due to the failure on the part of the teachers and ministers of the Word to grasp and to set forth this radical difference between the Bible and other books. The natural man, of course, does not know of the existence of this difference, and would regard it as foolishness if pointed out to him. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them."[b] But that the spiritual man should ignore this fundamental difference is deplorable. The natural man does not regard himself as a fallen creature; neither does he regard the career of self-improvement (becoming "as God" through the acquisition of knowledge) as having originated with Satan.[c] On the contrary, he is firmly persuaded that this is the Divinely appointed

[a] Rom. iii. 10–19. [b] 1 Cor. ii. 14. [c] Gen. iii. 5, R.V.

plan for humanity. It is, therefore, not strange that the natural man should use the Bible, in so far as he is pleased to use it at all, as a help in that career; that is to say, as a book of instruction and morality, from which one can learn how "to lead a good life," and can derive valuable hints for "uplifting humanity" and "making the world better."

The strange and portentous thing is that this, the unregenerate moralist's view of the Bible, is practically the view of apostate Christendom, in these closing hours of man's day. The great majority of the sermons to which church-goers listen on Sundays, and most of the teaching in which the Bible is used as a text-book, totally ignore the fact that the improvement of the natural man and of the world is a purpose wholly foreign to Scripture. The Bible has nothing whatever to offer to the natural man but death. ("The soul that sinneth it shall die." "All have sinned.") It pictures the state of the natural man as one of irremediable ruin and corruption. It is a condition of sinfulness, whose end is death; and all attempts to improve that condition are necessarily futile, and are in direct opposition to God's plan and purpose.

There can, therefore, be no greater perversion of

the Word of God than to use it for improvement of that which God has judged and condemned to death. It was not given to help fallen man along in his chosen path of disobedience; but, on the contrary, it was given to show him where that path leads, and how to escape out of it. Let us be very clear as to this point, for otherwise it is impossible to read the Scriptures aright.

The Bible, therefore, begins by showing that man, who was a perfect creation when he came from his Maker's hand (having been made in the very image and likeness of God), is now in a condition of complete overthrow, and is utterly helpless. From that starting-point, the Bible proceeds to unfold God's plan of dealing with this ruined creation. Unless we begin at this starting-point we shall err concerning the entire Scriptures. The very first section of the Bible (the first chapter of Genesis) puts before us the outline of this plan of restoration, showing that God, when acting in grace to restore a ruin, works in successive stages, not to improve the old creation, but to bring a new creation, more glorious than the first, out of the ruins of the old.

If we read the first chapter of the Bible with the thought in mind that it is God's revelation to a

fallen creature, born in sin, and that the very first work of the Holy Spirit is to convict of sin, we will see that God, in His book, wastes no words, and indulges in no preliminary remarks, but addresses Himself directly to His purpose. One short verse is all that He deems it necessary to tell us concerning what preceded the devastation wrought by sin. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."[a] This is absolutely all we know concerning the original creation of the physical universe. If this were man's book, it would not have such a beginning. A book written by men and pretending to speak by God's authority would have assumed to give all the details which the natural heart of man desires to know. But there is not here or elsewhere in Scripture the slightest attempt to gratify that taste for "science" (falsely so-called) which is an incident of man's present career in the pursuit of knowledge in the endeavour thereby to become "as God."

The next verse of the Bible[b] gives a brief but intensely vivid description of a ruined creation. We are there told that the earth became (there is in Hebrew no other word for "became" besides

[a] Gen i. 1. [b] Gen. i. 2.

that here translated "was") waste and void; that is to say, a complete desolation and an uninhabitable ruin; that it was surrounded by salt and barren waters (the great deep), and that it was enveloped in total darkness. It is strange that this scene of complete overthrow, desolation, and darkness, should ever have been regarded as the original state in which the earth was created by God, who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all!

It is to be noted that this verse refers to the earth only, and not to the heavens also, as in verse 1; so that the contrast which these verses present will be seen if we read them thus: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; but the earth became (after a period whose length is not given; it may have been hundreds of thousands or millions of years) waste and void, and darkness came upon the face of the deep."

It is very important to the understanding of God's way of redemption to get clearly in mind this picture of a ruined creation which God gives us at the very beginning of His revelation. The words are few, but they are sufficient under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, whose words they are, to convey to the believing heart a type of that condition into

which the race of Adam fell when it started upon its career of progress.

The first chapter of Genesis thus tells us, not only the story of Creation (or rather of restoration, which is a more apt designation of the work of the six days), but it tells us also, in type, the far more wonderful and thrilling story of Redemption.

In this ruined creation of Gen. i. 2 there was no regenerative power whatever. It was absolutely lifeless, with no possibility of evolution, development, progress, or improvement (all of which are words of man's wisdom, not learned from God, but from God's enemy), and without a single ray of light. Such precisely is man's state by nature, as described in Ephesians ii.: a ruined creation, with no recuperative power in himself, dead in trespasses and sins, with no light in himself, an alien and an enemy of God, having no hope and without God in the world.

Help—power and light—comes, and can only come, from without. The Spirit of God moves upon the scene, and the voice of Him who quickens the dead is heard (Gen. i. 2, 3). The Divine agencies of Salvation—the Spirit and the Word of God—are at once introduced, and then the method of restoration, in six successive stages, is disclosed.

We are also taught by this passage that God's action, in the six periods that followed, was all in pure grace. There was nothing in this ruin to attract God or to commend it to Him. So God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners (when there was not one lovable thing about us) Christ died for us.[a]

It is apart from our purpose to show by other scriptures that Gen. i. 2 describes, not the condition of the earth at its original creation, but a condition into which it fell at some subsequent time, it may have been millions of years thereafter. On this point we refer the reader to Rotherham's translation of the Old Testament (footnote to Gen. i. 2); to F. W. Grant's *Genesis in the Light of the New Testament*; Sir Robert Anderson's *In Defence*, and to other excellent treatises, readily obtainable, which set forth clearly the Scriptural proof of this proposition.

Neither is it our purpose to refer to the hints which Scripture gives as to what caused this overthrow. It is enough to remind the reader that Satan (Lucifer, "the light-bearer"), who was, and still is, the prince or ruler of this world (kosmos), had fallen, and was in rebellion against God at the

[a] Rom. v. 8.

time of the events recorded in the first chapter of Genesis. This is sufficient to account for the condition of ruin and darkness into which his principality had come. It is sufficient also to account for his enmity towards the new being, Man, who appeared upon the restored and inhabited earth on the sixth day, and to whom God gave dominion "over all the earth" and over all the creatures in it.[a] In this being, Satan saw his successor in the rule of the earth; and to entice him from God became, therefore, the prime object of that fallen spirit. But the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. To man the dominion over all the earth has been given; and by a Man, the Second Man, the last Adam and his children, it will be exercised.

In the description that follows,[b] we have God's own divisions of His work in dealing with a ruined creation. If we regard this important section of revelation, the section which God has put into the place of prominence at its very beginning, as being recorded merely to give us some account of how, and in what order, God prepared the earth for man, we shall derive from it comparatively little of what it is intended to teach us. But if we see in it a type of

[a] Gen. i. 26. [b] Gen. i. 3–27.

God's method in redemption, and His own divisions of the mighty work which He has undertaken, and which He is now carrying on, we shall be enabled thereby to comprehend more clearly His vast plan, and also to ascertain the stage which this stupendous work has already reached; and further to understand what yet remains to be accomplished in the ages that are to come. It will then be seen that the first chapter of Genesis spans the whole of Scripture in its immense range and scope, and the whole of God's dealings in grace with fallen humanity.

Shall we not lift up our hearts to Him in adoring wonder and praise, that He has not only Himself undertaken our redemption, but that He has also graciously given to us, who are the objects of His compassionate love, the means of entering intelligently into the plan of that mighty work? Shall we not turn then to the contemplation of it from the things of time and sense in that world-system around us, which has been contrived for the very purpose of diverting our attention from it? *

* I do not know who first pointed out the correspondence between the work of the six days of Gen. i. and the six dispensations. My attention was first directed to this correspondence by F. W. Grant's *Genesis in the Light of the New Testament* (Loizeaux Bros., New York).

THE WORK OF THE SIX DAYS

Compared with that of the Six Ages of Earth's History

1. Light before the Sun

THE sun was not seen by the earth until the fourth *day*. So Christ was not manifested until the fourth *age*. Yet the bringing in of light was the work of the first day. This must be the first effect of the voice of God, for the entrance of His words giveth light.[a] All His work is done in the light, for "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."[b]

We perceive from this first lesson in God's ways that He begins by making manifest the conditions of things exactly as they are. Satan's method of procedure is just the opposite. He attains his ends by blinding the minds of the unbelieving.[c]

The record of the first day's work is very brief. Light is brought in, and it is separated from the darkness, and the latter gets its name. The light revealed nothing good, but the light itself was good. "And God saw the light that IT was good."

This gives us the characteristic of the first of the *ages*, which extends from Adam to Noah. It is easy to determine where one age ends and another begins,

[a] Ps. cxix. 130. [b] 1 John i. 5. [c] 2 Cor. iv. 4.

not only by a change in the character of God's dealings, but also by the fact that an evening and a morning intervene between successive ages; that is to say, a universal judgment, followed by a morning of promise of better things for and from man.

After the fall of Adam and the ruin of his race, God's first work was to bring in the light of promise and prophecy, the sure word of prophecy, to which we are exhorted to give heed "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place."[a] We have in this first age the children of darkness and their works;[b] and the children of the light,[c] and their proper career and its result, which is to walk with God and to be translated, as Enoch was, before the judgments (*i.e.* the flood) come into the earth.[d] We see also that God separated the children of light from the children of darkness.

But, excepting the light, there was nothing good on the earth in this age. On the contrary, the earth "was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."[e] Again we read: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his

[a] 2 Peter i. 19. [b] Gen. iv. 16–25. [c] Gen. iv. 26; v. 32.
[d] Gen. v. 22–24. [e] Gen. vi. 11, 12.

heart was only evil continually."[a] This was the condition which the light revealed. Nevertheless, the light was good.

As pointed out below, there is a resemblance between the first day and the fourth, the subject of each being light. There is a like resemblance between the first age and the present (fourth) age of the world. Our Lord points to the days before the flood, and to the occupations of the men of that time as representing the conditions immediately preceding His return, and He compares the flood to the judgments that are soon to sweep over the earth.[b] Undoubtedly the men of that day were well pleased with themselves and their achievements. Undoubtedly they congratulated themselves upon the great and splendid progress they were making. They built cities, developed arts and industries, and cultivated music and poetry.[c] Population increased greatly,[d] and this has always been deemed, for some reason not very apparent, an occasion for congratulation. There were mighty men in those days, men of renown,[e] whose exploits were doubtless the subjects of the admiring comment of their times. They were busy, progressive, and prosperous days. But God's record

[a] Gen. vi. 5. [b] Matt. xxiv. 37–39. [c] Gen. iv. 17–24.
[d] Gen. vi. 1. [e] Gen. vi. 4.

of the age is that it was thoroughly corrupt, that the wickedness of man was great, and that all his thoughts, his great plans of progress and achievement, "were only evil continually." He (God) passes by all the great deeds of the mighty men, the men of renown of those days, whose great works were about to be swept away by the waters of the flood, and preserves the history of only one man, who believed God, and separated himself from all the lauded occupations of his day, and who made himself ridiculous in the eyes of his contemporaries by preparing for the coming day of wrath.

So the first age ended in the judgment of the flood, followed by the dawn of another trial of man, the descendants of righteous Noah, under more favourable conditions.

The character of the first age is, in a general sense, the character of all. Each age begins by a fresh work of God in advance of what preceded, bringing in new and more favourable conditions under which the natural man is to be tested; in each, man's wickedness develops and corruption spreads until his failure is indisputable; and each ends with a universal judgment. So there was evening and there was morning, one day (or day one).[a]

[a] Gen. i. 5.

2. The Waters Divided.

On the second day God brought in the firmament, or atmospheric heavens (the first heavens), and constituted a super-terrestrial reservoir, so to speak, in which vast volumes of water should be gathered and stored, to be drawn upon as needed by the dry land which was soon to appear. There is, however, as yet nothing solid, nothing stable, no foundation for a permanent work. The waters above the firmament have a very insecure tenure; they do not rise very far above the earth, and they are readily precipitated earthward.

This corresponds well with the second stage in the experience of the quickened soul, which occurs after the light has been let in and the havoc which sin had made is recognized. Heavenly influences are experienced, unseen things begin to attract, "feelings" are anxiously cultivated and noted, and the periods of uplift give great delight. But the unreliability of feelings as things for the soul to rest upon is quickly seen. A slight spiritual chill, a very small lowering of the spiritual barometer, causes a precipitation of these feelings (which never get very

far above the earth), and a state of depression then ensues.

We find this character of instability and absence of restraint to be the marked feature of the second earth-age, which extends from the flood to the confusion of tongues at Babel. When Noah and his family came out of the ark, God blessed them and gave them a few simple statutes.[a] This is the beginning of the government of the heavens upon the earth. It was not a very high level which God demanded that man should keep; but even at that level man could not maintain himself. Noah's first recorded act was to build an altar to the Lord, and to offer burnt offerings upon it.[b] His next was to plant a vineyard and to become drunken with the product of it; and we then have his disgrace, and the revelation of the wickedness of Ham.[c] The descent of Noah's offspring was likewise rapid, and they quickly reached the lowest level of human depravity. Journeying away from the east, and coming down from the heights where God had been known and worshipped, they quickly begin to busy themselves with the "works of darkness," building a city of bricks, and saying, "Let us make us a name"; and

[a] Gen. ix. 1–17. [b] Gen. viii. 20. [c] Gen. ix. 20–22.

also essaying to reach heaven upon the ladder of their own achievements.[a] Such is man in his state of departure from God; and the nature and object of his activities are all summed up in the brief record here given, to wit, making a name for himself, and reaching heaven (whatever his conception of it may be) by his own efforts.

The characteristic of this second age, as of the second day, is absence of restraint. As the atmospheric firmament could not restrain the waters which had been lifted above them, so the commands of God could not restrain the wills and inclinations even of the selected family which had been lifted up above the level of antediluvian humanity. In Gen. xi. 6 we have God's own description of the outcome of this age: "And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." "No restraint" is God's summary of the "development" of this age. There was nothing good here; and it is noticeable that, on the second day, God did not pronounce anything good.

So God confounded the language of all the earth.

[a] Gen. xi. 2–4.

and the Lord scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth. Thus the second age closed in the second universal judgment upon man.

The close of the second day as described in Gen. i. saw the earth still covered by the waste of barren waters. Likewise the close of the second age saw the earth covered with the restless peoples, and multitudes, and nations and tongues, which the waters typify,[a] engaged like the waves of the sea in aimless activity and meaningless motion. In all this scene there is nothing for God, and He sees nothing at all which He can pronounce good.

We know that during this period great nations arose in the earth; stupendous works were executed which recent excavations are bringing into view; arts and industries flourished; civilizations sprang up and attained a state of development never surpassed in later times; man, in a word, achieved all the great things for which he is now loudly admiring himself and shouting his own praises. But God makes no record of his doings, any more than He records the profitless motions of the waves. The great city Babylon, whose grandeur and magnificence have never been equalled in modern times, is known

[a] Rev. xvii. 15.

in the Word of God only as the mother of the harlotries and abominations of the earth. If the "triumphs of civilization" were the purpose of man's tenancy of the earth, then the climax of his mission was reached centuries ago.

Man's works are dead works; and God's Book, which is the "Word of life,"[a] contains no admiring record of them. There is not a thing that is highly esteemed among men which is not, upon the testimony of Scripture, an abomination in the sight of God.

But God Himself was about to do a new thing: to take another step in His vast plan of redemption, and to prepare a place upon which He could build, and a substance in which life could exist.

[a] Phil. ii. 16.

3. Dry Land. Living Organisms Yielding Seed

The work of the third day is of surpassing interest and instruction. In it God speaks twice, and this marks the end of the first series of days—the six days being divided into two series of three each, the third of each series being marked by a double utterance of God. The corresponding members of the two series present features in common. Thus we have in the first member of the first series light, in the first of the second series light-bearers; in the second of the first series the waters divided, in the second of the second series the waters populated; in the third of the first series the earth appearing in the midst of the waters, in the third of the second series the earth populated. This parallel will be more readily seen by presenting it in tabulated form, thus:—

1st day: Light. 4th day: Light-bearers.
2nd day: Waters divided. 5th day: Waters populated.
3rd day: Dry land brought forth. 6th day: Dry land populated.

"And God said, Let the waters under the heaven

be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so."[a]

It is safe to say that, at the time this record was made, no man on earth—except Moses, to whom God revealed it—knew or suspected that what is now the dry land had once been all submerged, and that the present arrangement of the earth's surface was brought about by the waters being gathered together unto one place, and the land caused to appear.

Then God spoke again on this third day and said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so."

God has no further dealings with the waters until the fifth day. His concern in this third day is with the dry land which He named "Earth," and with its productiveness, culminating in the fruit-tree whose seed is in itself in the Earth.

There is no difficulty at all in seeing in this record of the third day's work a clear and marvellously beautiful type of God's work in the third Dispensation or Age, which extends from the call of Abraham to the crucifixion of Christ. Dismiss-

[a] Gen. i. 9.

ing the miscellaneous nations, multitudes, peoples and tongues, to be gathered for the time being into one place, until He shall visit them in the fifth age, God occupies Himself in the third age exclusively with the calling out of a family to be His Earthly People, and with their patient cultivation for the production of a promised Seed.

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great." [a]

This was the selection and separation of God's people from all the nations; and hence during the entire third age, until after the crucifixion of our Lord (whose earthly life, as we have already pointed out, belonged to the age of Israel, and not to the present age), God occupied Himself exclusively with the affairs of this people, having no dealings with the Gentile nations except as they came into contact and into relation with Israel.

It is worthy of note that God pronounced the separation of the dry land from the waters to be good, indicating that this was to be a permanent

[a] Gen. xii. 1, 2.

arrangement. So His separation of Israel to be a peculiar people unto Him "in the earth" is a permanent arrangement; and through their fruitfulness the whole earth is yet to be blessed: for the remnant of the house of Judah shall yet "take root downward and bear fruit upward." And "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud and shall cover the face of the world with fruit." [a]

God not only separated this family to be a peculiar people unto Him in the earth, but He required fruit of them. Israel is referred to in Scripture under the types of the vine, the fig-tree, and the olive-tree. The record of man's total failure in this third age is given in parable, in that when the Lord came to His vineyard (Israel) upon which He had lavished so much care, and looked for grapes, He found only wild grapes.[b] When He came to the fig-tree making a fair show of vigorous life, He found thereon nothing but leaves.[c] And as to the olive-tree, we read in Rom. xi. that, although God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew, yet, during the present age, some of the branches

[a] Isa. xxxvii. 31; xxvii. 6.

[b] Isa. v. 1–7. [c] Mark xi. 12–14.

are broken off, and the branches of a wild olive are grafted in.

But God's purpose is never defeated by man's failure in the place of responsibility. The prominent thing in the work of the third day was the *seed*. The promise was to Abraham and his seed. Three times is this promise given.[a] And that precious Seed was produced out of the stock of Abraham; for we read in Gal. iii. 16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ." This is the precious grain of wheat which was to fall into the ground and die, that it might not abide alone, but bring forth much fruit.[b] And, consequently, "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."[c] For believers are born "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,"[d] and "His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God."[e] The gospel by Matthew is specially the gospel of this seed of Abraham and seed of David, through whom the whole earth is to be blessed, and who is to establish His kingdom

[a] Gen. xiii. 15; xvii. 8; xxii. 18. [b] John xii. 24.
[c] Gal. iii. 29. [d] 1 Pet. i. 23. [e] 1 John iii. 9.

in the earth. Hence in Matthew's gospel the genealogy of Christ is traced back to David and Abraham.[a]

The third earth-age closes a series of ages, in that it ended with the first coming of Christ and His crucifixion at the hands of His creature, man, in which act His own people Israel took the leading part. Thus was the evil nature of man fully brought out. Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; and men preferred the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.

Thus the third age closed in the judgment of Calvary, where the believer's sins were all judged and condemned, and where "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and (as a sacrifice) for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."[b] Wherefore there is now "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

This brings us to the threshold of our own age, "this present age," and to the radically new conditions which accompany it, and which arose out of those stupendous events which closed the age of Israel. For those who crucified our Lord became the princes or leaders "of this age."[c]

[a] Matt. i. 1. [b] Rom. viii. 3. [c] 1 Cor. ii. 8.

4. The Heavens Garnished

The work of the fourth day differs in a very marked way from that of the third. God now leaves the earth and is occupied during this day with the heavens—not the firmament or expanse which contains the atmosphere, but the vast region above and beyond this, the second heavens, or the starry heavens.

"And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: the stars also."

It is not said that God created the sun and moon on the fourth day. On the contrary, the word rendered "set" (verse 17) implies that they already existed, but were appointed to a special office on that day. It is the same word used in Numbers xxxv. 6, where God directs that six cities shall be appointed to be cities of refuge for the manslayer. "And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither." The cities, of course, already existed, but were now to be set aside for a special object.

This fourth day constitutes, as it were, an interruption or parenthesis in God's dealings with the earth. On every other of the six days He is dealing directly with the earth in some way; but at the end of the third day He breaks off His work on the earth, and, during the fourth day, is occupied with celestial objects. Nevertheless, what He does with these heavenly objects has reference to their ministry to the earth.

In like manner, at the close of the third dispensation, or age, God breaks off His dealings with His earthly people, and is occupied solely with the heavens, and with a heavenly people. This gives us the great characteristic of this present age, and we would do well to consider it attentively.

If one had been given beforehand a prophetic vision of God's doings on the earth during the week described in the first chapter of Genesis, and had been told to make a record of what he saw, his account would contain no reference to the work of the fourth day. He would have seen, immediately following the events of the third day, the waters suddenly teem with life, and then following that would have seen the glory of a finished creation,

with man in the place of dominion over all the earth and its happy occupants.

In like manner, the Old Testament prophecies contain no reference to the events of this age, which extends from Pentecost to the rapture of the Church. In those Old Testament prophecies there is no record of the three great objects of God's doings in this age, which correspond with the appointment of the sun, moon, and stars for their ministry to the earth: namely (1) the exaltation and glorification of Christ in the heavens; (2) the forming of the Church, and her appointment to reflect His light upon the earth during the night of His absence; and (3) the calling of the saints, the heavenly seed of Abraham, "as the stars of heaven for multitude," chosen to be His witnesses in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they are commanded to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.[a] The Old Testament prophecies are concerned only with the earth and the earthly people, *i.e.*, Israel; and they reveal, after the day of Israel ends in the coming of Messiah, a period of great trouble in the earth during the day of the Lord, followed by the age of millennial blessing.

[a] Phil. ii. 15, 16.

In this fourth age there is no open manifestation of God's working in the earth. To all appearances He is not working in it. In this age He has left man to himself, to follow the devices and imaginations of his own heart. On the earth it is "Man's Day."

Attention has already been called to the fact that while the sun, moon, and stars were not created on the fourth day, but existed previously, they were for the first time revealed on that day.

In like manner, the Son of God, who existed in all eternity, is now in His resurrection glory revealed as the Son of Man, glorified at the right hand of the Father; and we now know Him by whom "all things were created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible," [a] and who upholds "all things by the word of His power." [b] Likewise the Church existed as a secret, which "from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God," "according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," [c] and "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the

[a] Col. i. 16. [b] Heb. i. 3.
[c] Eph. iii. 9, 11.

Spirit."[a] Furthermore, the individual believers, the saints of this age, which are as the stars of heaven for multitude, and are like the stars in their office, though appointed to "shine as lights in the world"[b] now in this fourth age, which is the night of our Lord's absence; were yet "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world,"[c] and their names have all been written in the Lamb's book of life "from the foundation of the world."[d]

Since it is our purpose to consider in some detail the conspicuous features of this present age, the foregoing reference to its place in God's plan of the ages will be sufficient for this general survey of them.

[a] Eph. iii. 5. [b] Phil. ii. 15.
[c] Eph. i. 4. [d] Rev. xiii. 8; xvii. 8.

5. Living Soul Produced in the Waters

After the fourth day God returns to the earth, and now deals with the waters, commanding these dead waters to bring forth abundantly; and the waters thereupon teemed with living creatures.

In like manner, after the first resurrection and the removal of the believers (both those who have died and those who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord, to meet Him in the air),[a] God will resume His dealing with the earth. In that fifth age—which extends from the coming of Christ *for* His redeemed of this age to His visible coming *with* them, with flaming fire, in power and great glory—God will deal with all the nations and multitudes and peoples and tongues of the world, whom the waters typify,[b] and in these dead waters living soul will be produced abundantly.

During that fifth age the Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the earth by the faithful remnant of Israel; and "if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the

[a] 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. [b] Rev. xvii. 15.

dead?"[a] Thus the dead waters shall bring forth living souls.

The seventh chapter of Revelation gives us the outline of this part of the work of the coming age of judgments, of which the great tribulation is a conspicuous feature. In the first part of that chapter we see the four angels restrained from letting loose the four winds, while those chosen to be the servants of the living God for the ministry of that age are sealed against the coming dangers. Of these chosen ones there are a hundred and forty-four thousand, selected out of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

At verse 9 we see the results of their service: "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

And the explanation of this scene is given by one of the elders, who, after pointedly calling attention to this innumerable host, says that "These are they which came out of great tribulation (literally, "out of the tribulation, the great one"), and have washed

[a] Rom. xi. 15.

their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

On the fifth day the air, or atmospheric heavens, as well as the waters, were dealt with, fowl being brought forth to fly in the expanse or firmament.

In the fifth age not only is the whole earth to be dealt with, but the prince of the power of the air, with all his demon host, the wicked spirits in the heavenly places (Eph. ii. 2 and vi. 12) are to be cast down (Rev. xii. 9). "He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." The air, now occupied by these principalities and powers of evil, shall meanwhile have become the meeting place of Christ and His church (1 Thess. iv. 17).

The fifth earth-age is thus seen to correspond very closely with the work of the fifth day. That age will close in the great judgment in which the beast and false prophet are taken and cast alive into the lake of fire, the great armies they have gathered are dispersed and slain, and Satan is captured and bound for a thousand years.[a]

[a] Rev. xix. 17–20; xx. 2.

6. The Man and His Bride at the Head of the New Creation

The sixth day brings us to the completion of God's great work of restoration. Every detail of His vast plan has now been fully worked out, and we see the man and his bride installed over all the works of God's hand in the earth, dominion being given unto them (not to the man only, but to the man and woman jointly) "over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

It is not difficult to see in this record a picture in miniature of the glorious sixth age of the world, when the Second Man and His Bride, who is to share with Him the glories and responsibilities of His coming earthly reign, shall be at the head of the restored creation, in those blessed times of

restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.* This millennial age is the subject of much Old Testament prophecy with which we are very familiar. We shall not enter into this, since it is too remote from our main subject. But we would call to mind a fact which is often overlooked, namely, that this will be a time of blessing, not only for mankind, but for the whole physical creation, which was placed under man, and which he dragged down with him into the bondage of corruption and brought under the curse, when he disobeyed and departed from God, to enter upon the career which Satan recommended, of self-development by the acquisition of knowledge. The creation was made subject to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him (man) who hath subjected the same.[a] But the creation is eagerly looking forward to the manifestation of the sons of God; that is to say, to the

* I do not wish to be understood as indicating who the "Bride the Lamb's wife" of Rev. xix. and xxv. is. It is not within the scope of this book to present any theory on that subject. As for the expression the "Bride of Christ," which we so often hear, I do not find it anywhere in Scripture.

[a] Rom. viii. 20; Gen. iii. 17, 18.

coming of Christ in glory with His redeemed. For when that great event occurs, and Christ's earthly Kingdom is set up, then "Creation itself also shall be delivered out of the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God."[a] In the meantime, the whole creation groans and travails in pain together, until the day of "the redemption of the purchased possession.[b]

All these things are written in order that the thoughts of the redeemed of this age might be directed to that coming age of blessing, when Christ's Kingdom shall be established in the earth; and that we might pray, not with the lips only and as a matter of empty form, but with the heart and with clear spiritual understanding of what the words mean—"Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth as in heaven." This is "the gospel of the glory of Christ,"[c] which the god of this age is so solicitous to shut out from our hearts, and which does not dawn upon those whose minds he has blinded by the activities and the fading glories of this present evil age.

After the sixth day there remains only the

[a] Rom. viii. 21; Isa. xi. 4–9; xxxv. 1–7; lv. 12, 13.
[b] Eph. i. 14. [c] 2 Cor. iv. 4 (R.V.).

Sabbath; and so after the sixth age there comes the rest that remaineth to the people of God (literally, the "sabbatismos"),[a] the day of God, when the Kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father. "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He (Christ) shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."[b]

The length of that sixth age is to be one thousand years.[c] At its close Satan is to be released for "a little season." Again he succeeds in deceiving the nations, showing that the natural man cannot be reformed, even by a thousand years of righteousness under the personal reign of Christ in the earth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and no amount of development and culture will make anything else out of it. The sixth age closes in the judgment of the great battle recorded in Rev. xx. 8, 9; and then at last we read of the destruction of that last enemy, death. "And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."[d]

[a] Heb. iv. 9. [b] 1 Cor. xv. 24–26.
[c] Rev. xx. 4, 6. [d] Rev. xx. 14.

This brings us to the new heavens and the new earth, where there is no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; when the holy city, the New Jerusalem, shall descend out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof; and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth shall bring their honour and their glory into it; and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them—their God.[a]

This is "the day of God" mentioned in 2 Pet. iii. 12, 13, which shall be ushered in by the passing away of the heavens that now are with a great noise, and the burning up of the earth and the works that are therein (verse 10), and which will be followed, according to His promise, by "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein (or

[a] Rev. xxi.

by reason of which) the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

These details given in 2 Peter show that in the evening of the sixth age (some of the events of which are recorded in Rev. xx.) the present heavens and earth, which are reserved unto fire, shall be destroyed by that agency. John, in Rev. xxi. 1, merely records the fact of the passing away of the first (the now existing) heaven and earth, without stating how they are to be removed. Peter says, "We look for new heavens and a new earth." John was carried in spirit forward into that distant age, and could say, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."

Thus in the seventh age, the Day of God, He shall have accomplished, through the agencies of the Word and the Spirit, all the work of restoration which He has undertaken.

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had

made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it He rested from all His work which God created and made."

The record carries us no further. There is no evening and morning following the seventh day.

HUMAN TYPES OF THE SIX AGES

THE lessons which God teaches us in the first chapter of the Bible concerning the great divisions of His plan of redemption are elaborated, illustrated, and emphasized in the lives of the individuals whose stories are recorded in the book of Genesis. These lessons, moreover, reveal to us the scope and purpose of that book, its wonderful unity, and its marvellous fitness as an introduction to the whole inspired volume.

Genesis is composed of the biographies of seven selected individuals—Adam, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. Of these, Adam represents the ruined creation, and the other six represent respectively the six successive stages of God's work of restoration. Those lives, of course, teach many lessons besides, and contain (as do all parts of God's Word) inexhaustible stores of doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. But among those lessons there may be clearly seen the same outline and plan which are given to us in the first chapter of Genesis. A few words will suffice to point this out.

1. Seth. Light Admitted

With Adam's fall, darkness covered the earth. This darkness manifested its character and reached its greatest intensity with the murder of Abel. Following the description of that event, we have in Gen. iv. 16–24 an account of the works of darkness and their culmination in Lamech, the seventh from Adam. Immediately following this is the record of the birth of Seth, "another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew"; and of the birth of Seth's son Enos, with the brief but pregnant statement—"then began men to call upon the name of the LORD."[a] Thus, in the line of Seth the light appears; and there is no other record of this period except the separation of the children of light, in the person of Noah, from the children of darkness, and the character of the latter is written in Gen. vi. 4, 5, 12, 13.

[a] Gen. iv. 26.

2. Noah. Government given to Man

In Noah and his immediate descendants we have a representation of the second day's work and of the second earth-age. In Noah, government was entrusted to man, and he was authorized to take the life of the murderer.[a] But Noah himself fell into disgrace, the last recorded act of his life being his drunkenness and its consequences.

[a] Gen. ix. 6.

3. Abram—Abraham. A Chosen People. Fruit Produced

There was, as already mentioned, a twofold work on the third day. This twofold work corresponds with the two parts of Abraham's life, the division being marked by the change of his name from Abram to Abraham.

In the first period of God's dealings with him, Abram was called out from among the miscellaneous peoples and nations and tongues and tribes which were spread abroad "upon the face of all the earth"[a] at the close of the second age, as the waters were over all the earth at the close of the second day. In this first period of Abram's life there was nothing accomplished, except the separation from the nations of this chosen individual. God's first command to Abram was, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."[b] But on the third day, after the dry land was separated from the waters, God called the dry land Earth, "and God said, Let the earth bring forth," etc. So

[a] Gen. xi. 9. [b] Gen. xii. 1.

"when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him: I am the Almighty God (El Shaddai); walk before Me, and be thou perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly." [a] "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee." [b]

God now requires fruit; but the earth of itself could produce nothing. Here God manifests that mighty power which wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead—the power to quicken the dead. This resurrection power is most appropriately manifested on the third day, which especially speaks to us of resurrection. The earth contained only dead matter. Science has searched most anxiously, but has searched in vain, for a power in matter to produce life. The unbelieving have exulted with great joy when it was proclaimed (falsely, as subsequent investigations convinced even them) that tiny organisms had been spontaneously

[a] Gen. xvii. 1, 2. [b] Gen. xvii. 5, 6.

generated in dead and sterilized matter. How it would rejoice the enemies of God and of His Word, to be able to cross, without His direct intervention, the chasm between the not-living and the living! Unbelieving science has put forth its greatest effort in this direction, but has retired baffled and chagrined. The inspired record tells us that God made "every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew."[a] This is true science, and will stand for ever; science falsely so-called cannot overthrow it.

Precisely so it was in the life of Abraham, and in the life of God's chosen and separated people, Israel. During all that part of his life in which Abraham acted in the energy of the flesh, he produced nothing for God. The only result of his efforts and actions apart from God, and which were done at the suggestion of his wife, was the birth of Ishmael, who was the cause, not of blessing, but of trouble and bitter sorrow. This was not the promised seed, nor could the promise possibly be fulfilled in such a way. The efforts of the natural man can have no other effect than to hinder and delay God's purpose. The sons of God are born "not of blood,

[a] Gen. ii. 5.

nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[a]

God waited, therefore, until the fourteenth year after the birth of Ishmael, until Abraham's body was "now dead," and Sarah was past the time of child bearing,[b] and then He showed Himself to be the "God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."[c] Even before Isaac was conceived in the womb, God said to Abraham: "A father of many nations have I made thee"; thus calling the things that be not as though they were.

The demand upon Abraham for fruitfulness was based wholly upon God's revelation of Himself as "the Almighty God"; and the record states with great emphasis that the work is His alone. "I will make My covenant and will multiply thee"; "I will make thee exceeding fruitful"; "I will make nations of thee"; "I will establish My covenant"; "I will give unto thee and unto thy seed after thee the land in which thou art."

Abraham's part in all this was, not to work, but to believe. He attained the righteousness that is of faith in that "he believed God who quickeneth

[a] John i. 13. [b] Rom. iv. 19. [c] Rom. iv. 17.

the dead."[a] And this is the faith that is required for salvation. God demands that the sinner, who is dead in trespasses and sins, and who cannot quicken himself, or produce life, or accomplish anything but "dead works," should believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Not to Abraham only shall this righteousness be imputed, but to us also "it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."[b] "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus (or Jesus as Lord), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."[c]

Why is it that the Spirit of God, in the New Testament, lays such great emphasis upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead? Why is this the foundation of the sermons recorded in the book of Acts? Why is it recorded that "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus"?[d] Why was the essential requisite to apostleship that the candidate

[a] Rom. iv. 17.
[b] Rom. iv. 24, 25.
[c] Rom. x. 9.
[d] Acts iv. 33.

should be a witness of His resurrection?[a] Why was He "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"?[b] Why, when Paul encountered the Epicureans and Stoics at Athens, did he preach "Jesus and the resurrection"?[c] The reason is that death is the condition of the sinner. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."[d] And when Jesus Christ died, "He died UNTO SIN."[e] "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."[f] And not only so, but He was "made sin for us."[g] He went, therefore, into the place of death under the weight of all our sins, and under the judgment which comes from the inflexible holiness of God upon sin itself. Has God then power to raise from among the dead the One who suffered the penalty, not for the sin of one individual only, but for the sin of the whole world? If not, then indeed is our faith vain; then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished; then we are yet in our sins, and are of all

[a] Acts i. 22. [b] Rom. i. 4. [c] Acts xvii. 18.
[d] Rom. v. 12. [e] Rom. vi. 10. [f] 1 Pet. ii. 24.
[g] 2 Cor. v. 21.

men most miserable, having renounced the glories and pleasures of this age for the delusive hope of an age that will never come.[a]

"But now *IS* Christ risen from the dead"! . . .

God's purpose in the universe is fulfilled completely in a Man who has been raised from the dead, a Man who stands on resurrection ground wholly outside of this world, a Man between whom and this world every link has been broken by the cross.

This is the reason why, in the opening chapter of Ephesians, our thoughts are directed, in that wonderful prayer, to the exceeding greatness of His power which is put forth on behalf of us who believe, "according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come."[b] And this tremendous fact of the resurrection and glorification of Christ through the mighty power of God is the basis of the doctrine of Ephesians ii., that believers, once dead through trespasses and sins, God "hath quickened together

[a] 1 Cor. xv. 13–19. [b] Eph. i. 18–21.

with Christ." If He was not raised from among the dead, then have believers not been quickened; they are yet dead in their sins.

There is need in these days of making very prominent the truth of the literal resurrection of our Lord Jesus as the foundation truth of the faith once delivered to the saints. It is the God "who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus," the Almighty God, who alone can make us "perfect unto every good work"; and that, not by our own working, but by His working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight.[a] Our part is simply to believe in Him as the One who quickens the dead.

As it was with Abraham, so it was with Israel. As a people whom God raised to the place of privilege and of responsibility, they produced nothing for Him. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."[b] And yet it was Israel "of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever."[c] But in order to show that even the nation that had the law, and the covenants, and the oracles of God could

[a] Heb. xiii. 20, 21. [b] Rom. x. 3. [c] Rom. ix. 5.

not save itself or produce a Saviour, God waited until Israel was (like Abraham when Isaac was conceived) as good as dead, and all possibility of fruit-bearing had been extinguished; then He brought forth the promised Plant, for we read that He came forth "as a root out of a dry ground."[a]

It was God's mighty power, whereby He quickens the dead, that brought this Living Plant out of the dead nation, according as He promised, saying, "I will raise up for them a plant of renown."[b] In view of the utter failure of Israel, as the vine which God brought out of Egypt, and upon which He lavished such care,[c] we see the deep and blessed significance of our Lord's declaration, "I am the True Vine."[d]

Thus we must be ever reminded that, in all that concerns the salvation of man, and in all that concerns the production of fruit for God, even in His called saints, the work and the power are all His, that the glory too may be His alone. It is "not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good

[a] Isa. liii. 2.
[b] Ezek. xxxiv. 29.
[c] Ps. lxxx. 8–16.
[d] John xv. 1.

works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them."[a]

"I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect."

The branches cannot boast of the fruit they bear; for "the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine." "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."[b]

The earth cannot boast of the vegetation it brings forth; for the LORD God made "every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew."

[a] Eph. ii. 9, 10. [b] John xv. 4, 5.

4. Isaac. A Heavenly People

Isaac suggests the lessons of the fourth day, and of the fourth age. He is the typical heavenly man, who is always seen in the land of Canaan—the scriptural type of the heavenlies, to which the believers are raised in Christ. In particular is he the type of the One who was offered for a burnt offering, and who went without a word of protest to the altar of sacrifice, bearing the wood on His shoulder.[a] In Heb. xi. 19 we read that Abraham received Isaac from the dead in a figure. And here again Abraham displayed his faith in a God who is able to raise the dead, "accounting that God was able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Thus Isaac especially represents the Man who, after being offered, was raised from the dead.

Then, after this typical foreshadowing of the death and resurrection of Christ, comes the selection of a bride for this man who was raised from among the dead, and her preparation for, and bringing to, her husband. This is exquisitely told in that beautiful

[a] Gen. xxii. 1–9.

twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis, so rich in its typical forth-showing of God's dealings in grace, in this age, with those whom He has chosen in Christ to be the joint heirs with Him of all His unsearchable riches. How large a place this event occupies in the heart and mind of the Author of Genesis is indicated by the fact that the account of the selection of a bride for Isaac occupies the longest chapter of the book, and is given with an elaboration of detail not exceeded (if it be equalled) in any other part of the volume.

The moon fitly represents this companion of the owner and occupant of the heavenly country, reflecting, as she does, the glory of the sun, and without his light being dark and lustreless.

Finally, in Isaac's posterity are the "called ones," the chosen seed, who are as the STARS of heaven for multitude; for in Gen. xxi. 12 we read that God said to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called"; and in Romans ix. 7 this is applied to the children of promise, the apostle saying, "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called." See also Heb. xi. 18.

5. Jacob. The Natural Man Disciplined

Of all the characters of Genesis, Jacob fitly represents the work of the fifth day. In fact he fits in nowhere else. He stands out as a strong illustration of the persistence of the old nature and of the energies of the flesh in the quickened soul. His whole career is marked by the restless activities and schemings of the old nature, and by the repeated and severe discipline of God until that nature is subdued. Although Jacob belonged to Canaan, which was his by promise, nearly his whole life was spent in the outside world, and he ended his days in Egypt. But, just as God, after equipping the heavens on the fourth day, returned to earth and dealt with the waters on the fifth; so, after raising Isaac, in figure, from the dead, bringing to him a bride, and giving him by promise a seed as the stars of heaven for multitude, God visits Jacob in the various places of his exile, and by discipline brings forth living soul in the midst of the waters of that old nature.

It is worthy of notice that the time of sore trouble which is coming upon the children of Israel in the

future fifth age, and which is the subject of much prophecy, is expressly called "the time of Jacob's trouble." This designation is found in Jer. xxx. 7: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

6. Joseph. The Rejected One becomes the Saviour of His Brethren

The story of Joseph begins at Gen. xxxvii. 2, and extends to the end of the book. It thus occupies a space much larger than that given to any other character in the book. This is explained, not by the importance of Joseph as an individual, but by his importance as a type. He is the most nearly complete of all the types of Christ. He thus corresponds with and represents God's perfect man, as he was intended to be, and as he eventually will be in the person of the Second Man, at the head of creation.

Our special concern in this rapid survey of the contents of the book of Genesis is with those features of the life of Joseph which typify Christ as the Man to whom the birthright has been given, and in whom all God's purposes for the earth will be accomplished. It is a very striking fact that the birthright was taken away from Reuben, the firstborn, and given to Joseph, Reuben having forfeited his right by gross sin and treachery against his father. This is pointed out in 1 Chron. v. 1, where

it is said of Reuben that "he was the first-born; but forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph." In like manner Adam, "which was the son of God,"[a] by gross sin against God forfeited his birthright, which was accordingly taken from him and his descendants, and given to Another, who thus became the "Son of Man," and heir of all the inheritance and of all the promises to man. Luke's gospel, which presents our Lord as the Son of Man, reckons His genealogy, not forward from Abraham and David, as does that of Matthew, but backward to Adam.[b]

This son, Joseph, on whom the birthright was bestowed, was well beloved of his father, "more than all his children," and was clothed with peculiar honours and glories.[c] He was set forth before his brethren as one upon whom the highest earthly dignity and authority were to be conferred; but his brethren "hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him"[d] and "they conspired against him to slay him."[e] He was cast into a pit by his brethren, and so far as they were concerned, was murdered,

[a] Luke iii. 38. [b] Luke iii. 23–38. [c] Gen. xxxvii. 3.
[d] Gen. xxxvii. 4. [e] Gen. xxxvii. 18.

and what purported to be his blood was shown to his father. But he was taken out of the pit; and here again we have the resurrection in figure as a prominent feature of the life of one who is a pronounced type of Christ. After being thus raised out of the grave, so to speak, Joseph went to the Gentiles; and although coming to them as a lowly personage, he was recognized as "a man in whom the Spirit of God is,"[a] and was made ruler over all the land of Egypt. As such he became the saviour of all the earth, and ultimately was revealed to and acknowledged by his own brethren; so that every knee bowed to him, and all the world did him homage as the prince and the saviour. In all this, and other features which closer study would bring into view, Joseph is a very striking type of the perfect man, the sixth day's work—what the first man created on that day was intended to be; what the Second Man, who will be brought into the world in the sixth age, will be.

With these two men, and with these two alone as representative men, God has dealings. The Second Man is the last Adam. Every human being has his standing before God in one or the other of

[a] Gen. xli. 38.

these two men. By the natural birth all are the children of Adam, and inherit from him a corrupted nature; for although Adam was made in the likeness of God, he sinned, and after his fall he "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image."[a] A new birth from above is therefore necessary. No matter how correct, moral, and unselfish your life may be, O child of Adam, you must be born again.[b] The history of both these men and their respective races is fully written out before God. That of Adam and all who are in him is eternal death. That of Christ and all who are in Christ is eternal life. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."[c]

But Adam and his race have their day first in the earth. The whole book of Genesis is a repeated record of the setting aside of the elder, the first-born, and the bringing in of the second. This is now "man's day." The day of Christ is yet to come; but they who are Christ's, and who have learned the truth revealed in God's Word on this subject (and which it is the special purpose of this volume to set forth), are patiently waiting for it.

"Howbeit that was not first which was spiritual,

[a] Gen. v. 3. [b] John iii. 7. [c] 1 Cor. xv. 22.

but that which is natural (literally, "psychical" or "soulish") and afterwards that which is spiritual. "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Let us keep in mind then that God's work on the fourth day had to do with heavenly places and objects; and that His work in this fourth age of the world has to do with a heavenly Man and a heavenly people. For the central object of heaven's glory and of heaven's admiration, during this age, is a MAN at the right hand of God.

PART II

THE FOURTH AGE: THE HEAVENLY PLACES

THE FOURTH AGE: THE HEAVENLY PLACES

Distinctive Features of this Age

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us IN His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."[a]

God's work on the fourth day was very different from that on the third. His work in redemption in the fourth earth-age is likewise very different from that of the preceding age. It will require the most prayerful attention to the testimony of God's Word, under the direction and aid of His Spirit, to grasp the radical character of this difference. But it is well worth the effort if the believer would know, not only the plan and purpose of God and what He is actually doing in this age, but also would know his

[a] Heb. i. 1–3.

own position by the grace of God and in virtue of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and of the latter's place and occupation in this age.

Notwithstanding much clear and scriptural teaching which God is graciously giving to His people in this fourth watch of the night, there yet remains widespread confusion as to the special features of the present age, of that preceding it, and of that which is to come (the millennial age). These distinctive features of different ages are, in many minds, all jumbled together. The Church, which belongs exclusively to the work of *this* age, is very generally confounded with Israel, who belongs to the *preceding* age, and with the kingdom, which belongs to the *coming* sixth age. There is, moreover, an obstinate and inveterate tendency on the part of Christians, a tendency too often fostered by ecclesiastical teaching, to ignore what the cross of Christ has done for them, and to put themselves back under the law, which is an earthly institution belonging exclusively to Israel, God's earthly people, and having no application at all to the heavenly people. All the ecclesiastical systems of the times are more or less leavened by legalism.

We will be greatly assisted in getting the mind

of God as to this difference between the several dispensations, by fixing in our own minds the stupendous events which closed up the affairs of the preceding age, the day of Israel and day of the Law, and which ushered in this present age. Especially let us fix in our minds Christ's place during this particular age, which is as Son of Man at God's right hand.

The Scripture quoted above from Heb. i. 1–3, presents, in the Spirit's own words, the profound change that had taken place, and the consequent difference between this dispensation and that which had but just passed away. To Jews, living at the very time of the change, this was an extremely hard lesson to learn; but it would seem that Christians, living eighteen hundred years *after* the complete obliteration of temple-worship, ritual, and priesthood, need as much patient instruction as they, in this great truth.

In the above passage, and elsewhere in the epistle, strong emphasis is laid upon Christ having entered into the holy place, having seated Himself at God's right hand, and having taken up His age-long ministry as our great High Priest. He is there as a Man; and all who are "in Christ" are represented by Him and identified with Him there. He is entered

"into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."[a] They who are in Christ have no more part or lot in this present age and its doings than He has.

In Heb. x. 12 we read that Christ, "after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." That is to say, He is looking ahead, beyond this age, to that of His earthly glory, when He shall come visibly as "Son of Man."[b]

When our Lord was arraigned before the high priest and the Sanhedrim, and was adjured in the name of the living God to declare whether He was "the Christ, the Son of God," He replied in the emphatic affirmative, "Thou hast said it," and then added: "Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."[c] This answer gives His position and office in this age, and gives also His coming again in the future age as Son of Man; and it was this answer that threw Caiaphas, the earthly high priest, into an uncontrollable rage.

[a] Heb. ix. 24. [b] Matt. xxiv. 30, 37, 39, 44; xxv. 31; John i. 51; Dan. vii. 13, etc. [c] Matt. xxvi. 63, 64.

Again, when Stephen had concluded his address, and looked up steadfastly into heaven, being full of the Holy Ghost, and seeing Jesus standing at the right hand of God, he exclaimed, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." [a]

Also in the Epistle to the Ephesians, which especially reveals the believer's identification with Christ, and his present place with Him in the heavenlies, our attention is called to God s mighty power "which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." [b]

These scriptures, therefore, place before us that characteristic of the present age which is of first importance, namely, our Lord's place, as Son of Man, at the right hand of God. That is His place for this age only. When He leaves His Father's throne, and comes into the air to raise the dead saints and to change the living ones, and to call both to His side, this age and all its special characteristics will have ended, and another age with radically different features will begin. That next ensuing age will be, on high where He is, "the day

[a] Acts vii. 56. [b] Eph. i. 20.

of Christ," and on earth, where the judgments are unloosed, "the day of the Lord."

Moreover, this great central fact of the age—Christ's place at the right hand of God the Father—is the fact from which all the other characteristics of the age are derived, whether they be good or evil (for there are only the two classes, good and evil, nothing being merely indifferent to God). The good characteristics of the age are those which result from the presence in the earth of the Holy Spirit, and from His ministry. The Spirit's presence in the earth is directly connected with Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God, as prophesied in Psalm cx., quoted by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost,[a] and as also set forth in John vii. 39 and xvi. 7.

The evil characteristics of the age are the result of the attitude of the age towards this glorified Son of Man, whom the leaders of this age crucified, and whom the age itself rejects and excludes from its affairs. These evil characteristics of the age are especially the result of the operations of the "god of this age," "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."[b]

[a] Acts ii. 33, 34. [b] 2 Cor. iv. 4; Eph. ii. 2.

The Dispensational Effect of the Cross

Between this age and that which preceded it stands the Cross of Christ.

We may safely say that the crucifixion of the Son of God at the hands of His rebellious creature, man, is the most stupendous event in the universe. That it should make an enormous difference in God's dispensational dealings with man, is easily understood.

The cross of Christ, in the first place, puts our Lord Himself into a special position for this age, as we have already seen.

It also puts the Holy Spirit in a special place, namely, in the earth, with a special mission to believers and to the world. This is the Spirit's place in this age only; for He did not personally descend to the earth until Pentecost, and at the end of the age He will be taken out of the way, and then the man of sin will be revealed. While in the earth, indwelling the bodies of believers, the Spirit's presence acts to restrain the full development of the mystery of iniquity which is now working.[a]

[a] 2 Thess. ii. 6–8.

The cross of Christ puts Satan also in a special place. Christ having been rejected (for He came to His own and His own received Him not), and a murderer having been chosen in preference to Him (for they "denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them, and killed the Prince of Life"),[a] Satan became "the god of this age." Satan was a murderer from the beginning,[b] and is the one who has the power of death.[c] He is not called the god of any other age but this.[d]

The cross of Christ also puts the world into a distinct place, namely, under the guilt of having cast out the true Owner and rightful Heir, and of devoting its energies to the object of furnishing practical proof that man can advantageously dispense with Him. "When the husbandmen saw Him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the Heir: come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours." They did so, and the inheritance is now in their possession, God still suffering it to be so, to see what they will do with it. Shall the children of God join with these murderers in

[a] Acts iii. 14, 15. [b] John viii. 44.
[c] Heb. ii. 14. [d] 2 Cor. iv. 4.

the possession and enjoyment of their booty? Or shall they await the return of the rightful Owner?

This age is expressly designated "the age of this world";[a] and without entering now upon an examination of this expression, it may be said briefly that "the world," so often spoken of by our Lord, is that elaborate system, now occupying the earth, which includes all who have not accepted the Crucified One as their Saviour and Lord, and which embraces also their Christless doings, pleasures, and enterprises of every sort, from the positively wicked and vicious to the humanitarian and benevolent.

The cross of Christ, finally, puts the believer of this age into a special place. As being "in Christ," and identified with Him in the sight of God, the believer's place in this age is in the heavenlies.[b] Being "in Christ," he is in a new creation where all things are new, and all things are of God.[c] As to the world and all its affairs and interests, the believer's place is "crucified with Christ."[d]

It will be profitable for us to ponder well these prodigious differences in the relations and dealings

[a] Eph. ii. 2 R.V. (*marg.*). [b] Eph. ii. 6.
[c] 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. [d] Gal. ii. 20; vi. 14.

between God and man, which resulted from Christ's crucifixion and rejection by the latter, and from His exaltation by the Former to the right hand of the Majesty on high. As these mighty truths get possession of our hearts and minds, they will exert an influence in directing all our thoughts, desires, and expectations, away from and beyond "this present evil age" to that coming age, now so very near, and to the day which will dawn for us when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."[a]

[a] 1 Thess. iv. 16–18.

GOD'S WORK IN THIS AGE. THE SUN, MOON, AND STARS

It has been shown already that the characteristics of this age are of two sorts, good and evil, and we will consider them according to this division. It will tend to clearness in elucidating the subject if we consider each of these two classes of characteristics in connexion with the respective sources of the energy which produces them. There are two distinct sources of spiritual energy. The good features of the age are those which result from the operations of the Spirit of God indwelling the children of God.[a] Its evil features are those which result from the operations of "the spirit of the world,"[b] "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."[c]

If, in drawing the line of division between these two distinct and opposite classes of things, we are guided by the Word of Truth and the Spirit of Truth, we shall not go amiss. But we will, in so doing, find how skilful is "the spirit of the world" in the arts of deception, and how marvellously successful he has been, and is, in palming off his own

[a] Rom. viii. 9, 16, etc. [b] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [c] Eph. ii. 2.

projects, enterprises, and expedients for improving the world and bettering the condition of humanity, as Divine agencies, and also in persuading the deceived and misguided souls who engage so zealously in them that they are occupied with good works, acceptable to God, instead of (as is actually the case) working directly counter to His plan and purpose for this age.

The ministry and operations of the Holy Spirit in this age have to do with three great objects.

1. His first and chiefest object is to glorify Christ, now exalted to God's right hand. Our Lord declared that this should be the work of the Holy Spirit, saying, "He shall glorify Me."[a] How He should glorify Christ is also stated in the words that follow: "For He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I that He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." Whatever, therefore, tends to glorify Christ, by directing attention to Him as the Creator, Heir, and Lord of all things that the Father hath, is the present work of the Holy Spirit. Whatever enterprise, no matter how seemingly pure its purpose, or lofty its aim, which

[a] John xvi. 14.

does not tend to glorify Christ, and is not done in His name, is not conducted in the energy of the Holy Spirit, but in that of "the spirit of the world." By this simple, Scriptural test the simple-minded child of God can surely try the spirits and their operations.

2. The next object of the Holy Spirit's ministry is the forming and building up of the Church, the body of Christ, by uniting to Him, as the Head of the Church, those who are saved and quickened by the power of God through faith in Him. The Holy Spirit is not seeking to improve the world in this age. Far from it. God is now visiting the nations, not to civilize and develop them, but "to take out of them a people for His name,"[a] which is a very different thing. After this has been accomplished, He will return and do another work, namely, building again the tabernacle of David, that the residue of men, and all the Gentiles, may seek the Lord. That will be the work of another age. "And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it

[a] Acts xv. 14.

up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My Name hath been called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world."[a] Converting the world is no part of God's work for this age; and ignorance of this truth has diverted the efforts of multitudes of believers, and caused sore perplexity in their minds as they realized that, so far from getting converted, the world was keeping steadily on its course away from God.

This work of the Holy Spirit in forming the body of Christ by calling out from the world those who were "ordained to eternal life,"[b] is spoken of in many scriptures. In 1 Cor. xii. 13, we read: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free." Chapters xii., xiii., and xiv. of the Epistle relate to this subject. See also Eph. ii. 16–22 and iv. 1–16. When the last member of this body is put into its place, the Spirit's work in this age will be completed, and He will take the completed body out of the earth to join its Head in the sky.

3. The third work of the Holy Spirit in this age

[a] Acts xv. 15–18. [b] Acts xiii. 48.

(which is really included in that of forming and building up the body of Christ) is the sanctifying of believers, by making them acquainted with Christ and with the truth concerning what He is and what He does for them. He thus reproduces in them the likeness of Christ, God having chosen them in Him that they should be "holy and without blame before Him in love."[a] To this end the veil has been taken away that we may see Him who is invisible. As it is written, "Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with open (unveiled) face, beholding as in a glass (mirror) the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (or, "as by the Lord, the Spirit").[b]

The ministry of the Holy Spirit, in revealing to the hearts of believers the things of Christ, is spoken of in John xvi. 14, 15, quoted above, and is dwelt upon especially in 1 Cor. ii. 9–15.

These three great objects of God's work in this fourth age are well typified by the fourth day's work of appointing the two great lights, and the stars also, and in prescribing their ministry to the earth.

[a] Eph. i. 4. [b] 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.

1. The Greater Light to Rule the Day

In contemplating the sun, the great central object of the sky, so glorious that when present his very effulgence obliterates all other objects there, we see many things to remind us of our glorified Lord, who has now entered into the heavens. We have, moreover, the warrant of Scripture for taking the sun as a type or figure of Christ. In Mal. iv. 2, He is spoken of as the Sun of Righteousness, who is to arise with healing in His wings. In John i. 4 and 9, He is described as the Light of men, the true Light that lighteth every man coming into the world. In Luke i. 78, Zacharias hails Him as the Dayspring from on high. When He was transfigured on the mountain, we read that "His face did shine as the sun, and His garment was white as the light."[a] When John, in the vision of Patmos, saw Him in His glory, His countenance (or, as Rotherham translates it, His whole appearance) was "as the sun shineth in his strength."[b] In the New Jerusalem He will replace all other luminaries; for we read that "the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to

[a] Matt. xvii. 2. [b] Rev. i. 16.

shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."[a]

The sun is absolutely essential to the maintenance of life on the earth, being its sole source of light and warmth. Just so is Christ necessary every moment to the life of the believer. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."[b] In fact, Christ is our life.[c] As every moment the earth and all the teeming life that is in it draws upon the inexhaustible supplies in the sun, and does it through invisible channels of communication, just so do all those who have life in Christ draw unceasingly from the inexhaustible fulness of Him, in whom it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid,[d] though the channels through which these supplies are conveyed cannot be perceived by the physical senses.

The sun, too, is the sustainer of the earth, and of all the planets, holding them by invisible but unbreakable cords in their appointed paths. In this also it represents Him who upholds all things by the word of His power. It is the attraction of the sun

[a] Rev. xxi. 23. [b] John i. 4.
[c] Col. iii. 4. [d] Col. i. 19; ii. 3.

which, in some inexplicable way, holds these heavenly bodies in their proper orbits, while allowing them freedom of movement therein. Should that attraction lose its power but a single moment, it would suffice to permit the released orb to stray thousands of miles out of its course. How like the hold which the unfailing attraction of Christ has upon the soul that has once come under its sway! Thus it is "the love of Christ that constraineth us";[a] not our love for Him, which is a poor thing, but His mighty love for us—"the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."[b] Not for one single moment does He forget His own, or relax His hold upon them. Trusting in this unfailing love and watchfulness, we are free to move in our appointed paths. Were it conceivable that His attraction could lose its hold upon a soul that has once come within its mighty influence, that soul would fly off into all the perils, and into the frigid regions, of the outer darkness. But He has said, "My sheep shall never perish."

We may learn an important lesson also from the relative sizes of the earth and the sun. Astronomers tell us that the sun is three hundred thousand times greater in mass than the earth, and more than a

[a] 2 Cor. v. 14. [b] Eph. iii. 19.

million times greater in volume. In a word, the sun is inconceivably greater than the earth. It seems, therefore, incredible that an object so vast as the sun should be appointed to minister to one so relatively insignificant as the earth; and not only to the earth, but to the still more insignificant beings upon it. Man is disposed to measure the importance of an object by its magnitude; and when one learns for the first time the insignificance of this tiny earth of ours in comparison with the vast universe with its stupendous suns and systems, and realizes that it is relatively less than the smallest visible speck that floats in the air; and when he comes to consider the insignificance of a human being even relatively to this speck of a world, he thinks it impossible that man can be the object of God's love and care. But His thoughts are not as our thoughts; and even as He has given the great sun to minister, and to be the source of light and heat and strength, to this little earth and to the tiny beings upon it, even so has He given His own Son to minister unto, and supply every need of the souls whom He has saved by His grace through their faith in Him. He by whom and for whom all things were created, and without whom was not anything made that was made, stoops even

to washing His disciples' feet. There is no need which arises in the life of the humblest and meanest of them that He will not condescend to meet. "My God shall supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."[a] His care extends even to the very numbering of the hairs of their heads.

Our minds are not capable of taking in the manifold, diverse, and unceasing ministries of the sun to each of the innumerable living things that are in the earth. But we know that the sun's power and vigilance search out every individual blade of grass and supply its needs; and by meditating upon what we know of the sun's countless ministries in the earth, though we cannot in the least comprehend how they are carried on, we can see how it is possible for our God and Saviour to provide continually for us, who are of more account than the sparrows or than the grass of the field. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made."[b]

We may learn another lesson of the power and wisdom of God, by noticing the immense distance

[a] Phil. iv. 19. [b] Rom. i. 20.

of the sun from the earth, which is calculated to be about ninety millions of miles. This distance is inconceivably great, and yet it is trifling in comparison with other cosmic distances. Between the earth and sun there is no visible connexion whatever —seemingly a void immeasurably vast. Yet across this immense gulf the sun acts upon the earth and upon all things in it sometimes with tremendous force, sometimes with a touch more delicate than the snowflake, and does all this just as if there were no intervening space at all. However incomprehensible these things may be, they are facts which no one of sound mind can refuse to believe; though some men have been so foolish as to say that they will believe nothing which they cannot understand. Does not a consideration of these marvellous facts help us to believe that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ?—"that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"?[a]

If we can enjoy the presence of the sun, though

[a] Rom. viii. 38, 39.

it be ninety million miles away, we should have no difficulty in believing in the omnipresence of God, who made all the suns. Notwithstanding the immense distance of the sun, it is nevertheless present in the earth in a very real sense. We speak of going out into the sun, of standing in the sun, and of walking in the sun. We also speak of letting the sun come in. These words have a very real and practical meaning.

It is just so with Christ. Though now in the highest heavens, He is yet present with His own in the earth, and has promised to be with them all the days. Believers are exhorted, "As ye have received Christ, so walk in Him."[a] His place is in every believer's heart, and He is to be sanctified there, as Lord.[b] One can shut the sun out of his room, if he will, and so he may shut Christ out of his heart and life; but the sun still waits without ready to enter: and Christ too will come in to any man who will open unto Him,[c] and will brighten his life with the sunshine of His presence.

If the reader who has read thus far be one into whose heart the light of truth has not shined, he is lovingly urged to pause at this point, and to consider

[a] Col. ii. 6. [b] 1 Pet. iii. 15 (R.V.). [c] Rev. iii. 20.

the testimony of God, that His Christ, the true light that lighteth every man coming into the world, waits, like the copious sunshine without, ready to come in and work the transformation which only the light of truth can work; revealing the hidden things, illuminating the path, driving out all the lurking things of darkness, and making every corner of the being sweet and wholesome. Christ is waiting to come in. Open to Him. It is His voice, and this is particularly His message in these last days: "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." Open to Him; and God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, will shine in your heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.[a]

Again, the sun is the source of energy or power in the accomplishment of every real physical work that is done in the earth. By the direct heat and attraction of the sun the growth of plant life is effected, and plant life in its turn furnishes food, with its derived energies, to the entire animal life of the earth. All the energies of water-power and of wind-power are due to the action of the sun. All the power utilized through the expansive force of steam or

[a] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

gases, or in the form of electrical energy, is derived from the energy of the sun's rays, stored up ages ago in the coal-beds of the earth. This mighty power, moreover, is put forth without noise or commotion. Man is much impressed by the working of great machinery—ponderous masses of metal, moving laboriously and with great noise. But the sun, as a very small part of his ministry to the earth, is daily and hourly raising to the clouds above us prodigious masses of water, to an amount which we can gauge only by thinking of the enormous volumes of water which the mouths of all the rivers of the earth (that of the Amazon alone being one hundred and eighty miles wide) are pouring every moment into the sea; and this vast work the sun is doing so quietly and unostentatiously that we cannot hear the faintest sound of it, nor see the course of a single particle of all this ascending mass of water.

Just so it can be said that all real work that is done in the world is done in the power of Christ, and through the energy of His Spirit. Men seem to be very busy, and to be doing great things; but their works are "dead works" to be turned away from.* The only works that have life in them, and that will

* Heb. vi. 1; ix. 14.

remain, are those which are wrought by the power of Christ, for He is the power of God.[a] All other works are evil works, no matter how seemingly good their object may be. The mere fact that they are not done through the power of Christ and for the glory of the Father, makes them evil. Therefore our Lord's testimony concerning the world is "that the works thereof are evil."[b]

The work that God is doing in the earth in this age is accomplished, like that of the sun, without commotion or display. There is unceasingly a mighty work of God going on in all lands; but it attracts little notice among all the noisy doings of the world. This work is not being done by the marts of commerce, or by the great factories, or by the manœuvres of fleets and armies, or even by the formal observances and ceremonies of ecclesiastical systems; but wherever the story of the cross is told, wherever the good news of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is announced and believed,[c] God is quickening dead souls; and these, coming to Christ as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, are, as living stones themselves, being built up into a spiritual

[a] 1 Cor. i. 24. [b] John vii. 7. [c] Rom. i. 1–3.

house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.[a]

This is a real work, and one which will endure for ever. It is the work to which God will point in the ages to come as displaying "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."[b] But men are too deeply engrossed in their own puny and perishable works whereby they seek to give lustre to man's little day, to pay any heed to the great and wondrous work that God is now carrying on, and which will be the wonder and admiration of the universe when "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."[c]

Thus we see that the chief work of the Spirit of God in this age is to glorify Christ.

2. And the Lesser Light to Rule the Night

The moon has no light of her own, and her ministry to the earth is during the night. The only light she can throw upon the earth is that which she reflects from the sun. The moon is thus a witness to the existence and reality and brightness of the sun

[a] 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5. See also Eph. ii. 19–22.
[b] Eph. ii. 7. [c] 2 Pet. iii. 10.

during his absence. To the extent to which the moon reflects the light of the sun, she is "a faithful witness in heaven."[a]

This is very easy to apply. The moon is a fair type of the Church, not in her inward character as the body of Christ and the building of God, which is not seen of men; but in her representative capacity, in what she was required to be—a faithful witness of Christ to the world during the night of His absence. In this outward or representative capacity, as in every instance where there has been human responsibility, the Church has dismally failed. Her light is fitful, varying, and uncertain. Seldom does she present a full-orbed testimony; and often her light is wholly wanting, and she is not found in the heavens at all. Not only has the visible professing Church failed to give a full and uniform testimony to Christ, thus failing to reflect His light into this dark world, but she has also set up to be herself a light, and has put forth her own teachings as a guide to men in the place of His Word.

The performance by the moon of her proper office to the earth depends upon her position and attitude relatively to it and to the sun. She must be

[a] Ps. lxxxix. 37.

occupied solely with the sun, standing fully in his light and presenting her illuminated side fully to the earth, so that the latter sees in her only the light of the sun. The professing Church has sadly failed to keep her proper place, and hence the world has not had the light which it should have had during this long night, and which would have made it a very different world. Every believer should acknowledge this failure, and confess before God his share in it.

Then again there are seasons when a cold black shadow is seen to steal across the face of the moon, and to extinguish her light. It is the dark shadow of the world which has come in between her and the sun. The occurrence which this typifies is very familiar. The world has been only too successful in casting its influence over the Church, and in marring her testimony. A moon that is eclipsed by the world can render the world no service; neither can a worldly Church be of any benefit to the world.

3. And the Stars also

There is one sun and one moon, as there is "One Lord" and "one body";[a] but of stars there is an innumerable host.

[a] Eph. iv. 4, 5.

The stars fitly represent, in their relation to the earth as well as in their ministry to it, the individual believers who are living in this age of darkness. These are the heavenly seed of Abraham; for his seed was to be "as the stars of the sky for multitude," besides being "as the sand that is by the seashore innumerable."[a] The latter expression suggests Abraham's earthly seed, the children of Israel; and the former his heavenly seed, the children of God, the believers of this age: for "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham," and "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."[b] "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."[c]

In Rev. i. 20 the risen Christ, walking in the midst of the lampstands, explains that the seven stars which He holds in His right hand represent the angels (or messengers) of the seven churches. Whatever we may understand to be signified by the angels of the churches, it is clear that these stars represent individuals in a position of responsibility in the earth, their business being to shine.

[a] Heb. xi. 12; Gen. xv. 5.
[b] Gal. iii. 7, 9. [c] Dan. xii. 3.

The business of the stars is very simple. They have only to shine. They do not have to furnish the light, for it is given to them. They have only to let it be seen. Just such is the simple business of the sons of God in this age. "That ye may be blameless and sincere, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom shine ye as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."[a]

The believer does not have to provide his own light. He does not have to produce a shining surface by means of polish or culture. His light is given to him. It is the light of truth. None others have it but believers only. It is a solemn fact, a great responsibility. There are many false lights in the world; and unless believers let their light shine, there will be nothing to guide perishing souls in their search for the place of refuge: for "ye are the light of the world."[b] It is not a great thing that is required of them: only to let their light shine. Though it be but the feeblest glimmer and twinkle of a light, let it shine. It may suffice to guide some wandering soul aright, and thus to glorify God. Therefore, "Let your light so

[a] Phil. ii. 15, 16 (*marg.*). [b] Matt. v. 14.

shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."[a] For a star to shine is for it a "good work," since that is what is required of it. Let us then take this great responsibility to heart. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord."[b] But "no man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light."[c] What are we believers doing with the candles which the Lord has lighted? Are there not enough candles of the Lord in the earth to illumine the world with the light of God's truth? Alas! the lights of believers are being more and more obscured by business (hidden under a bushel) or by pleasure (hidden under a bed); and so the darkness deepens in the earth as the fourth watch of the night draws to its close.

In order that the star may let its light be seen in the earth, it must maintain its separate sphere above the earth. The light of the fallen star is no longer seen. So the believer, to be of any service as a witness for Christ to the world, must maintain his place of separation from the world. When the

[a] Matt. v. 16. [b] Prov. xx. 27. [c] Luke viii. 16.

believer mingles freely with the world and its doings, his testimony is extinguished, his light has gone out.

The star does not seek honour for itself, or to make itself known. Nothing is known about the star but its light. It is just a point of light in the heavens, and nothing more. Nor should the believer seek to be something in the world, or to get any honours or distinction for himself. He is just a witness for Christ,[a] that is all; and the only thing to be considered about a witness is, not his social standing, or his wealth or his looks, or his talents, but—his testimony. John the Baptist was a pattern witness. His description of himself was "a voice."[b]

We have considered our Lord as the Sun whose glory fills all the heavens. But it is a beautiful manifestation of His grace that He places Himself among His redeemed, whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. In Rev. xxii. 16, among the last words that come to us from Him in His glory, He says, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star." To His earthly people, Israel, He is the root of David; to His waiting Church, the Morning Star. "For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all

[a] Acts i. 8. [b] John i. 23.

of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."[a]

Being the first begotten from the dead, and the first-fruits of them that slept,[b] He is the Morning Star, for the morning star brings in the day; and as the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely, He is the bright star, "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence."[c]

[a] Heb. ii. 11. [b] Rev. i. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 20. [c] Col. i. 18.

A HEAVENLY PEOPLE

THE important lesson in all this is that the saved of this age are a heavenly people; and their heavenly position, interests, and relationships are fully set forth in Scripture, to the end that they may be mindful of them and may live accordingly. How much there is in Scripture to direct our thoughts to the heavens!

The Father whom the Son has revealed to us is our Heavenly Father. "Call no man your father upon the earth: for One is your Father which is in heaven."[a] It is He whom our Lord addresses as "Holy Father,"[b] and it would seem that human impiety could go no further than in bestowing that title upon a sinful man.

Our Lord is there.—"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us";[c] and we who have been quickened together with Him, have also been raised up together, and made to sit

[a] Matt. xxiii. 9. [b] John xvii. 11. [c] Heb. ix. 24.

together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.[a] The truth that God identifies us with the Man at His right hand, and that we are "accepted in the Beloved," should have power to detach us completely from the world and all its affairs, and impel us with all our hearts to "seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."[b]

Our Eternal Home is there.—"In My Father's house are many abiding-places. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."[c] Does any one who can take this to himself question whether that place will be to his liking, and suited to his desires? But after all, it is not upon the place that He would have our thoughts rest, but upon Himself; for He adds, "If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you (not unto a place, but) unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

Our True Life is there—even now.—"For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."[d] The believer's life is a hidden life, as Christ's life is now hidden. The eye of the world can see nothing of the believer's life of fellowship with the Father

[a] Eph. ii. 6. [b] Col. iii. 1.
[c] John xiv. 2. [d] Col. iii. 3.

and the Son. It can see when a Christian gives up the world and the so-called pleasures at which it labours so hard and for so little, and when that happens it calls the forsaking of these husks a "deprivation"; but it can see nothing of what is gained in exchange. What that life is will not be manifested until Christ is manifested; for He will not appear without His redeemed. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."[a] "Beloved, now are we the sons of God"—even now, though there may be little to distinguish us from those who have not been born of God—and "it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."[b]

Our True Substance is there. — Whatever possessions we may have on earth may be called "ours" but for a brief moment. Even those who live for this world should know that. But "their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names."[c] Our Lord bids us not to lay up treasure on earth, but to

[a] Col. iii. 4. [b] 1 John iii. 2. [c] Ps. xlix. 11.

lay up treasure in heaven. Paul could write to the Hebrews: "For ye had compassion on my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."[a] In these days of strenuous contention for earthly possessions, there are not many, perhaps, of whom this could be said; but it belongs of right to every son of God, for they are joint-heirs with Christ of all the riches of the universe.[b]

Hence it follows that our Heart is there.—"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."[c] Can this be said of you, beloved child of God, whose eye is resting on these words? Where are your affections? Do you realize that you have affections, and that they are at your disposal, that you can bestow them where you will? God's Word says so, and bids you "set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."[d] Will you say that you cannot set your affections where you will? Have you ever tried? Do you know the extent of the power that is at your service in Christ? God knows it, and He says, "Set your affection on

[a] Heb. x. 34.
[b] Rom. viii. 17.
[c] Matt. vi. 21.
[d] Col. iii. 2.

things above." Do you but exercise the will, and He will supply the power.

Our Calling is a Heavenly Calling.—"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."[a] This is the object of the Spirit's ministry, namely, to direct attention to Him; that He may be glorified, and that they who are here called "holy brethren" may be enabled to live and walk on earth as a heavenly people. Directing us to "consider Him" is the method whereby the Holy Spirit supplies the needed encouragement for a walk that is beset with difficulties and dangers. He too, even Christ Jesus, was made a partaker of flesh and blood, that, through death, He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is to say, the Devil, and thus deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage. For truly He taketh not hold of angels; but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold. Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren. Thus He is a merciful and faithful High Priest to make propitiation for the sins of His people: for in that He Himself hath suffered

[a] Heb. iii. 1.

being tempted, He is able to help them that are now being tempted. Wherefore, "consider Him."

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the believer is shown his heavenly position and calling, as having been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and now raised up and seated in the heavenly places in Him; and then, on the basis of this great fact, he is exhorted to walk worthy of the calling wherewith he is called, that is to say, his heavenly calling. Everything in the world is designed and contrived to make the believer consider himself a part of it, and even to make him a participator in its aims and pursuits. The enemy is all too successful in his efforts to make believers unmindful that theirs is a *heavenly* calling. To that end he has devised many earthly callings so apparently worthy and high in their aims as to commend them to the Christian, and yet which, when tested by the Scriptures, are seen to be snares, calculated to enlist him in the service of Satan and in working for the accomplishment of Satan's objects. An excellent and instructive illustration of this deceptive working of Satan is found in the various devices which Pharaoh put forth to detain the people of God in Egypt after God had called them out of it:

Egypt being a type of the world, as Pharaoh is a type of its prince. The first of these devices was a proclamation of religious liberty, which was issued after sore judgments had come upon the land. It is not necessary, said Pharaoh, to go out of Egypt in order to serve God: "Go ye, sacrifice to your God, *in the land.*" [a]

Precisely the same device is practised in our day; and our attention is frequently called to the "religious tolerance" and "freedom of conscience" that now prevail, as if this were convincing evidence that the world is vastly improved. Had Pharaoh's device prevailed (and the reason it did not was simply because God kept the decision of the matter in His own hands; his people doubtless would have considered this concession all that was needed), it might possibly have improved the land of Egypt, and have raised its standards as a whole. But that was not God's object; and eventually the inevitable result would have been to have polluted the pure worship of Jehovah with customs derived from the idolatrous worship of the Egyptians.

This has been the result in Christendom, ever since the external Church departed from her heavenly

[a] Ex. viii. 25.

sphere and calling, to become a power in the world. For many centuries now the professing Church has tried the experiment of sacrificing to God "in the land"; and the result has been that, notwithstanding one great "Reformation" and many lesser ones, as well as numerous "revivals," the worship of the Father, who seeks those who will worship Him "in spirit and in truth,"[a] is on every hand polluted by forms and customs, and even by actual idolatries, borrowed from the religions of the world.

The next device which Pharaoh urged, after learning that God insisted on the departure of His people, was that they should not go very far away. "And Pharaoh said: I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to Jehovah your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away; entreat for me."[b]

But the distance which Jehovah required His people to put between themselves and the land of Egypt was three days' journey. To the follower of Christ this means the time He lay in the tomb, the distance between the cross and His resurrection life. The Christian, who has been crucified to the world, and is risen with Christ, is completely separated from the world and its affairs.

[a] John iv. 24. [b] Ex. viii. 28.

There is a borderland, a place "not very far away" from the world, which the prince of this world has made very attractive, and where things worldly and religious, worldly pleasures and religious observances, are mingled in varying proportions to suit every degree of sensitiveness of conscience. It will suit the purposes of the enemy very well to have God's people occupy this borderland where so many are now dragging out a miserable, half-hearted, and unprofitable existence. They may themselves be saved (and will be if they are truly converted); but it will be like Lot, "so as by fire," and they will suffer great loss, all their works being destroyed.[a] Meanwhile, their lives and occupations, instead of leading others to forsake the world, are encouraging them to remain in it. There is nothing about the world-system more deceptive than the religious dress which it assumes in order to disguise its real character; and Satan has no more serviceable allies than the worldly Christians who seek their gratifications in his realm.

After further and more severe judgments, Pharaoh tendered further concessions: first, that the men alone should go, leaving their little ones behind;[b]

[a] 1 Cor. iii. 15. [b] Ex. x. 11.

and finally, that all the people should go, but that their possessions (flocks and herds) should be left behind.[a]

The lessons we have here are of great importance; but we can dwell but briefly upon them. There is a plausible notion which finds great favour in the laxity of these times, to the effect that youth must have its "innocent pleasures and pastimes"; and that when the indefinite period called "youth" is past, it will be time enough to become "religious" and to attend to "religious duties." The effect of trying to live out of the world while leaving the little ones in it, is certain to be most agreeable to the purpose and policy of the prince of this world; but it is generally disastrous to the little ones. Let us not parley with such a doctrine as this, which leaves the souls of our young people in the place of peril at that time of life when they are least able to guard themselves against the thousand snares that are set for the innocent and unsuspicious. It is not true that the children of Christian parents need any of the amusements of the world. There is no period in the life of the human being, after consciousness is once awakened, when Christ does not satisfy every

[a] Ex. x. 24.

longing of the quickened soul; and to find Him it is necessary to go forth "unto Him without the camp."

Finally, one of the most successful of the enemy's devices for retaining a hold upon God's people is to induce them to have their interests and belongings in his domain. "Go ye, serve Jehovah; only let *your flocks and your herds* be stayed; let your little ones also go with you." He knows full well the truth of the scripture: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

But the calling wherewith we are called includes serving God with all our substance. There is no complete separation from the world until the believer's business and property are wholly consecrated to the service of God. Our calling is a "heavenly calling." It is uncompromising. It calls for a complete separation of ourselves, our households, and our possessions, from the domain and service of the god of this world. Our Lord has been cast out of the world with shame and reproach. He had no place and no property or interests in it. The prophecy of Dan. ix. 26 (R.V.), He shall be "cut off, and shall have nothing," was literally fulfilled. This world, then, is no place now (it will be in a coming age) for those who belong to Christ. It may

seem a place of innocent delights, a place where even the religion of Christ is permitted and patronized—

"And yet—'outside the camp,'
'Twas there my Saviour died!
It was the world that cast Him forth,
And saw Him crucified.
Can I take part with those
Who nailed Him to the tree?
And where His name is never praised,
Is there the place for me?

"Nay, world! I turn away,
Though thou seem fair and good;
That friendly outstretched hand of thine
Is stained with Jesus' blood.
If in thy least device
I stoop to take a part,
All unaware thine influence steals
God's presence from my heart."

"Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."[a]

Our Inheritance is reserved in Heaven for us.—It will be often (if not always) the case, that the believer, in separating from the world and entering upon his heavenly calling, finds it necessary to part with some of his belongings, particularly such as

[a] Heb. xiii. 13.

would be only an encumbrance in a journey through the wilderness. Therefore, the Holy Spirit directs our attention to the fact that, when we were born again of the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, it was to an incorruptible inheritance. For God "according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (or us) who are being guarded by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." [a]

Our Glorified Bodies are in Heaven.—It is counted among the certainties, among the revealed facts which believers say "we know," that there are reserved for them in heaven, bodies like that which our glorified Lord now has, and which He will bring with Him when He comes for them.[b] "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle (or our earthly tent) be dissolved (or loosed down), we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this (tent) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." [c]

[a] 1 Pet. i. 3–5. [b] Phil. iii. 21. [c] 2 Cor. v. 1, 2.

This is surely a fact of great interest. The body here spoken of is said, in Phil. iii. 21, to be "like the body of His (Christ's) glory." In 1 Cor. xv. 44 it is called a "spiritual body," meaning (as the context clearly shows) a body suited to a "spiritual man." It is spoken of in contrast with a "natural" (literally, "psychical" or "soulish") body, that is to say, a body suitable to the natural (psychical) man; in other words, suited to what we are by nature, men with unspiritual appetites, desires, and inclinations. We can learn from Scripture enough concerning the character of this "body of glory" to make us earnestly desirous of being "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven."

Our Hope is in Heaven.—The true hope of the Christian is not in any conditions which are to be produced, or which are to arise at any time in the earth, until our Lord comes to it again.

Faith, hope, and love, are coupled together in many passages of Scripture. In Col. i. 3–5, Paul writes: "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your FAITH in Christ Jesus, and of the LOVE which ye have to all the saints, for the

HOPE which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard in the word of truth of the gospel."

Any other hope that is put before the eyes of men, or which is indulged in their hearts, is not heard of "in the word of truth of the gospel"; yet such is the apostate condition of Christendom that the "blessed hope" of the gospel of God is all but discarded for the delusive hopes of the gospel of the age, of which we will have more to say in the next division of our subject.

The hope set before the believer, and upon which he lays hold as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast "entereth into that within the veil." Yes, it is out of heaven that our "blessed hope" is to come; and the same grace of God which brings salvation to all men, teaches us that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts (kosmical desires) we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (age) looking for *that blessed hope and the glorious appearing* of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."[a]

The hope that is laid up for us in heaven, whereof

[a] Titus ii. 11–13.

we hear "in the word of truth of the gospel," is so important a part of the riches that now belong to us as a heavenly people, that it will be good to dwell further upon it, for the special reason that the hope laid up in heaven has been so generally lost sight of, and hopes of earthly origin substituted for it. Many Christians have the faith of Christ, and the love of God, in a measure, but lack "the blessed hope." They are not looking for One to come out of heaven, but for some improvements to develop on earth. Yet faith and love are incomplete without hope. The faith and love for which the Apostle gives thanks in the above passage are "for (or on account of) the HOPE" laid up in heaven.

Faith is especially associated with the Spirit, being the conviction wrought by Him in the hearts of those who hear the Word. His special mission is to "convict."

Love is especially associated with the Father. "God is love." "God so loved the world." "God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us." "God commendeth His love toward us." "The love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts." "The love of the Father." "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us."

But the Hope of the believer is the coming of Christ to receive him unto Himself. Hence faith and love point to and have their fulfilment in the hope that is laid up for us in heaven. Thus, in Col. i. 27 we read that the "mystery among the Gentiles" is "Christ in you, the HOPE of Glory." Also in 1 Pet. iii. 15 (R.V.), believers are exhorted to "sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the HOPE that is in you."

Another scripture which teaches this relation of faith, love, and hope, is the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians. Paul here again gives thanks because, in these believers, faith, love, and hope, are all found in their right relation. He says: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of FAITH, and labour of LOVE, and patience of HOPE in our Lord Jesus Christ."[a] The remainder of the chapter amplifies this, speaking of how they "turned to God from idols" (a "work of faith," wrought by the Holy Spirit, because the gospel came to them "not in word only, but also in

[a] 1 Thess. i. 2, 3.

power and in the Holy Ghost," and was received by them "with joy of the Holy Ghost") "to serve the living and true God" (that is, God the Father, as the words "His Son" in the next clause show, this being a "labour of love"), "and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come," this being "the patience of hope."

The prayer in 2 Thess. iii. 5 conveys the same lesson. "The Lord (the Holy Spirit, for it is He who guides and directs our hearts) direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." Here again we have the faith wrought by the Spirit, and the love of the Father, leading on to the hope that is laid up for us in heaven, "from whence also we wait (the patience of hope) for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able to subject all things unto Himself." [a]

Many of God's people, who are conscious of a lack of purpose and steadiness in their lives, and of power in their testimony, and know not to what cause to

[a] Phil. iii. 20, 21 (R.V.).

attribute it, would find the lacking element supplied if they gave the blessed hope its true place in their hearts. May what has been here written be blessed by the Lord to that end.

Our Names are written there.—When the seventy returned from the mission upon which our Lord had sent them, they expressed great delight, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us through Thy Name." There be few who could have this occasion for joy, and doubtless the natural gratification of the flesh in the exercise of power was prominent in it; for our Lord said, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." In this latter ground of rejoicing all believers can share!

We have a reference here to the "book of life" which is often spoken of in Scripture, mentioned first in Ex. xxxii. 32, and last in Rev. xxii. 19. From Rev. xiii. 8 and xvii. 8 we find that this is the book of the slain Lamb, and hence contains the names of all who are, or yet will be, redeemed by the shed blood of the Lamb of God. Their names have been written in that Book "from the foundation of the world."

The eternal security of the believer is strongly proclaimed by these scriptures, and this assuredly is a solid ground for rejoicing with a joy that no man taketh from them.

The City for which we look is in Heaven.—The final expression and outcome of the world's tendencies is the City. Amid all the jumble, confusion, and disorder of any great city, one can perceive the working of mighty energies and of great intelligence towards the object of making a huge structure which will contain, readily accessible to man, all that is needed to meet his wants, and to gratify all his desires in his state of departure from God.

Cain manifested this tendency as soon as he "went out from the presence of Jehovah and dwelt in the land of Nod, in the east of Eden."[a] In the next verse we read: "And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bare Enoch; and it happened he was building a city, and he called the city after the name of his son, Enoch."

This propensity also manifested itself in the descendants of Noah, immediately after the flood. The bent of their inclination, and of their idea of the best way to advance their interests, expressed

[a] Gen. iv. 16.

itself in the words, "Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven." [a]

The city, therefore, is the final outcome of civilization, the consummate product of Man's Day. It is man's substitute for what he lost in departing from God, and from God's plan for mankind. Hence, in the city, and there only, do we find the extreme results of all the propensities of fallen man, the highest and the lowest, the best and the worst. Hence it is that those in whom the love of the world operates are irresistibly drawn to the city, where we find millions huddled in unclean and unsanitary quarters, ill clad and underfed, and thousands seeking vainly for employment; while fields and farms are deserted, and the labour needed to till the soil and to cultivate the crops cannot be procured. Where do we find an explanation for these anomalies except in the Word of Truth?

As these lines are being written, one of the topics which is being discussed at great length in the daily newspapers is the question, How to check the exodus from the rural districts to the city? It would be instructive to consider some of the plans that human ingenuity suggests to meet this grave difficulty.

[a] Gen. xi. 4.

But, among all the opinions expressed and remedies suggested, no one gives the true reason, namely, that the cause of man's desire for the city and what it contains is that his heart has turned away from God; and no one suggests the true and only remedy, which is, to be reconciled to God, "Who has reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ." [a]

So long as man is "without God in the world," he will be irresistibly impelled to seek those benefits of the confederated efforts of men which are to be found only in the city.

But the "comforts and conveniences of city life" do not satisfy the soul of the believer; and thereby he manifests himself, not as a child of Cain, but as a child of Abraham, the father of all believers. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." [b] So the true children of Abraham, the heavenly seed of whom we are writing, may say, "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." [c]

The Apostle John, who is pre-eminently a type of the heavenly man, was carried forward in the Spirit into the coming age, and was permitted to see that city which we are seeking. He writes by

[a] 2 Cor. v. 18. [b] Heb. xi. 10. [c] Heb. xiii. 14.

Divine command: "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God"; and then follows his glorious description of it.[a]

Thus we have in heaven, the city whose Maker and Builder is God, another strong tie linking us with the heavens.

Our Citizenship is in Heaven.—This truth is implied in what has been already set forth, but it is expressly stated in Phil. iii. 20. In this chapter the Apostle is speaking of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and the exhortation based thereon is how those who have that prize in view should be minded and should walk here below. "For," he declares, "our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (R.V.).

To be a citizen of a great nation is always a source of pride and satisfaction to the heart of man; but what citizen of an earthly nation has such a ground for boasting as he who can say with sincerity of heart, "my citizenship is in heaven"; and who can add that he is looking for his Saviour and Lord to

[a] Rev. xxi. 10–27.

come, thence to be the Prince of the kings of the earth, and the Desire of all nations?

But to be a citizen of a great nation is not merely a source of pride. It has also great practical advantages, particularly when one is sojourning in a foreign and unfriendly country. Paul's Roman citizenship stood him in good stead on several critical occasions; and although his real security lay in the fact that he was an ambassador for Christ and a citizen of the heavenly country, those incidents serve nevertheless to illustrate the lesson. The duty which a nation owes to the protection of its citizens in their persons and property is paramount, to such an extent that, if need be, its entire national resources should be put forth in his behalf. If a citizen of this country were injured, in his person or property, while sojourning in a foreign country, it would be the obligation of the home Government, in theory at least, to secure redress for that wrong, even though it were necessary for that purpose to put forth the entire armed force of the nation by land and sea.

The great powers of the earth may come short of their responsibilities to those whose allegiance they claim; but the home Government of the heavenly

country never fails in guarding the person and meeting the needs of the humblest citizen who relies upon its care. "For He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."[a]

Furthermore, if the sojourner in a foreign land be there on a mission for his sovereign, the latter is chargeable, not only with his protection, but with his maintenance in a state appropriate to his mission. Believers are here, every one of them, on a mission for the absent Lord. "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ"[b]; and to us is committed the ministry of reconciliation, to declare to men, who are by nature the enemies of God, that they have been reconciled to Him in the death of His Son;[c] and the promises to these servants of Christ is that *God will supply their every need*, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.[d]

What shall we then say to these things? Their source is not from the imagination of men, but from the Word of the Lord. But God will have spoken

[a] Heb. xiii. 5, 6.
[b] 2 Cor. v. 20.
[c] Rom. v. 10.
[d] Phil. iv. 19.

all these words in vain. so far as concerns our present walk and service, if their effect be not to separate us, who have heard them, from that world which, though He so loved it as to give His only begotten Son, nevertheless so hated Him as to put that Son to a death of shame. and so hates Him still as to despise the offer of remission of sins and eternal life now proclaimed in His name.

The general truth deducible from all the foregoing scriptures is that this present fourth age of the world is characterized by works of God which are heavenly in their nature, namely, (1) glorifying Christ raised from among the dead and exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high; (2) forming the Church to be the body of Christ, and to give outwardly to the world a corporate testimony to the absent Christ; and (3) separating from the world individual believers to be His witnesses, and to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of Life; all of this being typified by the work of the fourth (creative) day as recorded in Gen. i. 14-19.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THIS AGE

We have thus far confined our attention to what *God* is doing in this present age, and have referred only incidentally to the counter operations of the powers of evil. Before entering upon the examination of these, it will be useful to give a brief summary of the marks which seem to distinguish this age from others. The following list may not be exhaustive; but it certainly embraces the conspicuous features of the age.

1. It is the age of the absent and rejected Christ. What gives the age its special character is not merely that Christ is personally absent; but that His absence is the consequence of violent and murderous rejection by those whose lead the age has followed, and with whose purpose it has been in full accord and sympathy, and who hence are appropriately called "the princes (*i.e.* rulers or leaders) of this age."[a]

2. It is the age of the presence on earth of the Holy Spirit, whose age-work we have already considered.

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 8.

3. It is the age of the forming of the Church—the body of Christ, and the building of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, and against which the gates of hades shall not prevail. This building of God is the Church in its inner character, and is distinct from the visible, external Church, which the moon typifies, and in which, since human responsibility enters. there is failure.

4. It is the "day of salvation," the dispensation of the grace of God, in which remission of sins and eternal life are preached among all nations in the name of the crucified Son of God, whom the Father has raised from among the dead, and seated at His own right hand.

5. It is "the age of the world," the age in which "the world," in the fulness of the development of its aims and of its organization, comes into prominence, and occupies the earth.

6. It is the age whereof Satan is the god, that is the spiritual guide, to whom homage is paid—the age in which he prosecutes, to the full limit, his business of "blinding the minds of the unbelieving."

7. It is the age ensuing upon the completion of

God's revelation to man; and consequently, as it has been aptly called, the age of "the Silence of God."*

Rotherham gives the literal translation of Heb. i. 1, as follows:—

> "Whereas, in many parts and in many ways of old, God spake unto the fathers in the prophets, at the end of these days He has spoken unto us in His Son."

This, of necessity, is the last word of grace, and completes the revelation of God to guilty and disobedient man. Now that He has manifested the riches of His grace in the gift of His Son, and in the message of peace and pardoning love which He has brought to the children of disobedience ("for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"[a]), there is a long pause, during which God is silent, permitting man to have his say and to multiply his words.

This interruption of God's open dealing with the world and of the uttering of His voice, is explained in 2 Pet. iii. 9. Its purpose is to give to all men an opportunity of accepting the

* *See* Sir Robert Anderson's book published under that title.

[a] John i. 17.

offer of remission of sins and eternal life through Jesus Christ, the risen Son of God. It is not an indication of slackness, on the part of the Lord, to fulfil His promise of coming again, though it has given occasion to many to say so. In the chapter referred to, the Apostle Peter gives the solemn warning (verse 3) "that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." And then he explains this long delay, saying (verse 9), "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

But God will speak again. The Lord will break this long silence and will cause His glorious voice to be heard. But when He speaks again it will be, not in grace, but in judgment. "Behold, it is written before Me: I will not keep silence."[a]

"Whose voice then shook the earth; but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven."[b] "For the powers of

[a] Isa. lxv. 6.

[b] Heb. xii. 26.

the heavens shall be shaken"[a]—those wicked powers in the heavenly places which are under the direction of the prince of the powers of the air, and with whom the Christian has his warfare. These shall be shaken, and Satan shall be cast down.[b]

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people."[c]

"And the LORD shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones."[d]

This hour is close at hand; yet to-day He is still saying: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth"; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters"; "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."[e]

"Wherefore, the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."[f]

[a] Matt. xxiv. 29. [b] Rev. xii. 7–9. [c] Ps. l. 3, 4.
[d] Isa. xxx. 30. [e] Isa. xlv. 22; lv. 1; Rev. xxii. 17.
[f] Heb. iv. 7, 8.

PART III

"THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD"

"THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD"

"Now we have received not THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, but the Spirit which is of God." (1 Cor. ii. 12.)

We have seen that the work which God did on the fourth day, and which He pronounced "good," was the appointment of the Sun, Moon, and Stars, to give light to the earth; and that the corresponding work of the fourth age, in which the energies of the Holy Spirit are engaged, relates (1) to the glorifying of Christ, the true light, (2) to the illumination of the Church with the reflected light from His Word, and (3) to the separation of individual believers, and their equipment to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. This is the work which God can pronounce "good."

There are many other works going on in the world, which are "highly esteemed among men," and which appear to be so excellent and commendable that Christians by the thousands are occupied in them, thinking thereby they are doing God service, but which have no relation to any of the

above objects. These are works which have a temporal value only: the works of the world, and for the benefit of the world. They are therefore not "good" in God's estimation, whatever estimate men may have of them. Our Lord said of the world, "But Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil."[a] This is a very searching passage, and by it the hearts of disciples may be tested to see whether they really believe the testimony of their Lord. We propose now to examine the works of the world in order to learn why He incurred its hatred by declaring their real nature to be evil, notwithstanding that the purpose to which many of these works are directed is to benefit humanity, to improve its condition, and to alleviate its misery.

We may enter upon this examination confident of arriving at right conclusions, if we conduct it under the light of Scripture. That light will not fail us at this critical point; but it is of the utmost importance that we should have full confidence in the light, and be prepared to believe unqualifiedly what it reveals to us. We need to be on our guard here, because the doings of man's day, when illumin-

[a] John vii. 7.

ated by the pure and steady light which beams from the "Word of Truth," are seen to be very different in their character from what we formerly supposed. Heretofore we may have looked at the occupations and achievements of the world from man's point of view. Now we are to look at them from God's point of view. His thoughts are not as man's thoughts; and indeed so different are they that, in our Lord's words, "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."[a]

It should not, however, surprise us in the least to find that we have been totally deceived concerning the real source of the inspiration of the age and the age-movements; concerning the real purpose concealed behind its grandest projects; and concerning the real end towards which all its prodigious energies are tending. This should not surprise us; but on the contrary we should rather expect to have our ideas on these subjects completely transformed under the light of the inspired Word, for the reason that those ideas were impressed upon our minds in our unbelieving days. They are the ideas which are shared by the unbelieving world, and in fact they are important articles in the creed of the

[a] Luke xvi. 15.

world, which is zealously promulgated and defended by the leaders of the age and the apostles of its progress and civilization. To doubt or question those ideas is rank infidelity to the world and its sovereign prince; and to assail them openly is nothing less than treason, rendering him who dares so to do justly liable to be stigmatized as a "pessimist."

It would be strange indeed if God's idea of the world should be the same as the world's idea of itself. But, in the believer's growth in the knowledge of the truth, he comes first to believe God's testimony about his own sinful state and nature; and afterwards to believe His testimony about the world. The enemy's power to deceive a man as to the motives of his own heart is more easily broken than is his power to deceive him as to the real character of the world and its motives. The world, notwithstanding all the miseries, crimes, and wickedness it contains, is organized and managed with such consummate skill and with such expertness in the art of deception, that, even after the redeemed sinner comes to accept the Bible unqualifiedly as the Word of God, he is still very loth to believe its testimony concerning the world. Many Christians

(probably the greater number) get no further in the truth than to attribute to the influence of Satan all that is base, criminal, and vicious in the world, and to extol as good and praiseworthy all the various activities that make for "progress" and "civilization." It is only when we accept fully the testimony of God concerning the world that we come to know that, just as in the natural man dwelleth no good thing,[a] but that he is totally and irretrievably corrupt, so likewise in the world there are no good works, but, on the contrary, "the works thereof are evil"; and that, in fact, its best works are its worst. Just as in the natural man, there is nothing capable of development by culture, reform, or moral training (which are the worst enemies of regeneration) to render him meet for the presence of God, so likewise there is no germ or principle of good in the world capable of development under the influence of culture, education, religion, etc. (which are the most potent enemies of the personal return of Christ) to render it fit for the presence of God.

The reader, therefore, in entering upon this difficult part of our subject, is earnestly reminded of

[a] Rom. vii. 18.

the words of our Lord, recorded in John xii. 36: "Believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light." Even though the light should reveal, as it most likely will, a state of things contrary to your previous conceptions of them; even though it show that your ideas about the world were very erroneous, nevertheless, believe, not in the world, but in the light. Remember what we learned from the lesson of the first day, that God begins His work by bringing in the light, and showing things exactly as they are. Until the light is admitted, the work does not go on. If you have rejected the light as to what the world is, do not be surprised if the work in your own heart has halted. If the light within you be darkness, how great is that darkness!

In considering what the Scriptures tell us concerning God's work in this age, we saw that it is all done on the foundation of the finished work of Christ (who is "the Truth," John xiv. 6), and carried on in the energy of the Holy Spirit. It is "not by might, nor by power; but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." [a]

The first great truth of Scripture with reference to all works which are not of God, is that they are

[a] Zech. iv. 6.

all on the basis of "the lie"[a] (and in all its countless forms "the lie" involves some denial of Christ or His work), and that they are carried on in the energy of another mighty spirit.

The Bible teaches that energy is spiritual in its nature; and some men of science have obtained an inkling of this truth when they conjectured that "force" was the ultimate fact of the physical universe.

The spirit referred to as the source of the works which are not of God, is one of the highest dignitaries of the universe. He is expressly called, in the passage quoted at the head of this chapter, "the spirit of the world." The title itself sets forth a truth of the weightiest character. The world is animated, and the energy expended in carrying on its affairs is supplied, by a mighty spirit; and the character of that great being gives the true and only explanation of "the world." Just as the true Church is indwelt and guided by the Holy Spirit, so likewise is the world indwelt and guided by a powerful spiritual being. "The whole world lieth in the evil one."[b] And just as the Holy Spirit works in and through individual

[a] 2. Thess. ii. 11. [b] 1 John v. 19 (R.V.).

believers, who are the "sons of God,"[a] so likewise the spirit of the world is "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."[b] The word rendered "worketh" in this passage, is literally "energizeth," signifying to work with great energy. The channels, therefore, through which this spirit of the world works, are "the children of disobedience," including all, whether refined or base, whether moral or immoral, who still are in the nature of the disobedient man Adam, and who have not obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The believer, therefore, has properly no more to do with the world and with its works and purposes than the Holy Spirit has to do with the spirit of the world and with his works and purposes. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"[c]

As said above, in order to understand the true character of the world and its affairs, we must

[a] Rom. viii. 9, 14, 26; 1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19.
[b] Eph. ii. 2.
[c] 2 Cor. vi. 14–16.

understand the character and aims of "the spirit of the world." The explanation of a man and his actions is found in his spirit, whence his motives proceed ("for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?");[a] the explanation of the world and its doings will be found in the character of the spirit of the world. Believers would not be so greatly deceived regarding the world, if they paid attention to what the Bible reveals regarding Satan and his plan for humanity.

The prevailing idea of Satan represents him as the promoter of vice and crime. One natural consequence of this gross error is that there exists, throughout Christendom, widespread unbelief in the personality of the Devil. Since the pulpit has practically abandoned the duty of teaching the people, and has substituted the preaching of "sermons" for the preaching of Christ and His Word, the prevailing conception of the Devil is derived, not from the Scriptures, but from *Faust* and the comic papers.

The Satan of Scripture is the highest and mightiest of all created beings. This truth is forcibly set forth in Jude 8, 9. We are there

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 11.

taught not to "despise dominion and speak evil of dignities"; and the practical example by which this lesson is enforced is that even the head of the angelic hosts, the archangel Michael, when, disputing with the Devil, he reasoned with him about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing charge, but could only say "the Lord rebuke thee."

In Zech. iii. 1, 2 we have a vision of "Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan."

In Ezek. xxviii. 12–19, where, under the title of "King of Tyrus," a great being is addressed, who is called "the anointed cherub that covereth," who was in Eden, the garden of God, and who was perfect in his ways from the day he was created until unrighteousness was found in him, we read: "Thus saith Jehovah: Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." A very different being this from the vulgar demon who is used to frighten children and amuse adults!

Throughout Scripture Satan is revealed, not only as a mighty being possessing great wisdom and subtlety, and as at the head of vast spiritual powers,

whose seat of empire is in the heavenlies; but he is revealed also as one who still occupies a position of high dignity, a position so high that only Jehovah Himself is higher. Our Lord gives him the title of "prince of this world," which title is emphasized by being recorded three times in the gospel of John (xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11); and He did not dispute Satan's statement when the latter "showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and the Devil said unto Him, All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me."[a]

We do not know why God has seen fit to delay the execution of judgment upon this mighty rebel, and to permit him meanwhile to retain his position of dignity in heaven and of power over the earth; but the fact is clearly set forth, and that is sufficient for our information and protection. We are not, unless we choose to be, "ignorant of his devices."

Now the character of a monarch's reign is estimated, not by the base things that may be discovered among the vicious classes of his subjects, or even by the scandals of Court circles, or yet by his private life; but by his general policies devised and carried

[a] Luke iv. 5, 6.

out for the prosperity, advancement, and glory of his entire realm. He would, of course, be justly held responsible for the existence of wickedness, and for failure to adopt the most efficient means for suppressing vice and crime. But his state policy would not be judged by the existence of these evils. Rather would he receive credit for his efforts to cure them and to alleviate their consequences.

Just so, if we will but use our intelligence aright, will we view and estimate the policy and aim of the "prince of the world." We have no warrant whatever for believing that the aim of this great ruler is to plunge his realm into criminal lawlessness and anarchy; or that he employs his time and energies in inciting his subjects to the commission of crimes and to the practice of vices and debaucheries. It is the corrupted flesh (and not the Devil) that causes men to fall into these evil courses. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."[a] On the other hand, we have every reason for believing that Satan's policy for his realm is to make it (what his subjects loyally avow it to be) "the best of all worlds," and that all his

[a] James i. 14.

great powers and consummate wisdom are directed to that end.

The prince of this world is, of course, responsible for the excesses of his subjects; but, on the other hand, when we see the many moral agencies in the world, and the great efforts put forth (wholly apart from the influence of the gospel) to check the evil tendencies of the age, who can deny that he has not been wise and resourceful in devising measures for the moral well-being of his realm?

Satan has set himself up as God's rival. He has sufficient might and sufficient self-confidence to dare to do this, and also to believe that he can govern his realm to better advantage in his own way than in God's way. In this act of daring there is no more warrant for supposing Satan to be the author and instigator of vice and folly, than for indulging in a like supposition concerning an earthly leader when he sets up the standard of rebellion against the constituted authority.

Satan sought to strengthen his hands against the Almighty, and to ensure the continuance of his empire, by attaching to himself the race of Adam. This he did, not by promising a course of sinful pleasure and unbridled indulgence, but by promising

that man would, by following the career he commended to him, become "as God"; and the particular respect in which he promised our first parents that they should become Godlike was in the acquisition of knowledge.[a] No higher career could be offered to a creature than that of striving by his own efforts to become like God. Man counts no aspiration higher than the possession of knowledge. And now, after six thousand years of arduous struggle in this noble career, there have come into prominence leaders of religious thought, who announce, to large and delighted audiences and from the pulpits of "Christian" churches, that the great quest of humanity has at last been achieved, and that "there is no essential difference between deity and humanity"; in other words, that man has become "as God." Such is the essence of the "New Theology," which has lately come into prominence.

I have written elsewhere on this subject,* and do not wish to repeat what is there said. The foregoing will suffice to make it clear that the Satan

[a] Gen. iii. 5 (R.V.).

* *The World and its God*, Alliance Press Co., 692 Eighth Avenue, New York; Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 12 Paternoster Buildings, London, E.C.

of Scripture is a very different personage from the popular conception of him; and from this study of his character and policy we can better understand the real character and drift of "the world" whereof he is the animating and energizing spirit, as well as the reigning ruler or prince.

THE WORLD

It will be appropriate at this point to ascertain as definitely as we may what is meant in Scripture by "the world," especially in such passages as connect the world with Satan or speak of it as hating Christ, and as being at enmity with God.

There is some confusion on this point arising from the fact that there are four different Greek words, each having a distinct significance of its own, all of which are rendered in our common version by the same English word, "world." This confusion, however, can be readily cleared up, and in doing so a useful lesson may be learned.

1. One of these words (*gē*) means simply the earth or the land, and is generally so rendered. It is found in Rev. xiii. 3, "And the whole world wondered after the beast." The R.V. substitutes "earth."

2. Another word often rendered "world" (*oikoumenē*) means "the habitable earth." This word is found in the following passages among others:—

Matt. xxiv. 14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Luke ii. 1: "A decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed."

Rom. x. 18: "And their words unto the ends of the world."

Heb. ii. 5: "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak."

This verse states that the habitable earth to come (*i.e.* in the millennial age) is to be put in subjection to man, in fulfilment of the original purpose of God;[a] and the context shows (verses 6–10) that this is the new Man, Christ Jesus.

Rev. iii. 10: "I will keep thee from the hour of trial which shall come upon all the world."

With this expression (the "habitable earth") we have no direct concern, it being only important to notice that the foregoing passages do not speak of any relation between the habitable earth and Satan. The two remaining words rendered "world" in the A.V. are connected with that personage.

3. The word *aiōn*, meaning an age, or period of time having characteristics peculiar to itself, has been sufficiently defined; and inasmuch as the special significance of this word is always indicated herein

[a] Gen. i. 26.

when the passages where it occurs are quoted, we need not dwell longer upon it. This word, which is generally rendered "world," and sometimes "age" (as in Eph. ii. 7), is in Eph. iii. 11 rendered "eternal." "According to the eternal purpose" is, literally, "According to the purpose or plan of the ages."

4. The last of these words, and the one which is used in the passages which speak of the "prince of this world," "the spirit of the world," the hatred of the world for Christ and its opposition to God, is *kosmos*. This word is applied in English to the physical universe. In Scripture it has generally a narrower meaning; but its leading thought is, as when applied to the physical universe, that of an organized system, composed of many elements, but related to each other, and governed by a set of laws; a system in which there is concerted movement—neither a dead stagnant thing, nor a disorderly confusion. Thus it will be seen that the word "world" denotes something different from "the earth," and different from "the age."

Scripturally, then, "the world" is that system or organization of persons and their activities, of which Satan is the ruler, and of which the aim and purpose

is opposed to the aim and purpose of God: "All that is in the world . . . is not of the Father, but is of the world";[a] and it will be seen that the central point of the antagonism between God and the world is concerning Christ and His mission as the Saviour of the world, and as the Son of Man who is to have dominion over all the earth. The world is Satan's system elaborated for the occupation of the earth, and it reflects his great wisdom, power, and resourcefulness.

"The Age of this World"

In Eph. ii. 2, as already noted, both the words *aiōn* and *kosmos* occur; and there, of course, it would be impossible to render both by the English word "world." The translators have escaped the difficulty by adopting the expression "the course of this world." The literal rendering, however, is full of meaning and instruction. Thereby we are informed that this present age is "the age of the world," that is to say, the age which is distinguished from other ages as that in which the world-system comes to its full development and displays its full character. This system, which has adopted—uncon-

[a] 1 John ii. 16.

sciously, of course—the Scriptural name and calls itself "the world," has been gradually taking more and more definite shape during the present age. We now have the "world's doings," the "world's news," the "world's progress"; and to be a "thorough man of the world" is regarded as a highly commendable thing.

The progress of this world-system towards completeness of organization and towards the occupancy of the whole earth has been very rapid during the past century. The principal factors in this development of the world-system have been invention, manufacture, and commerce, and especially the means which have been devised for rapid movement and communication between distant places. These agencies have created interests which have overstepped geographical boundaries, and have drawn people of different nationalities and races close together. Trade, secure investment of capital, business interests, and "spheres of influence," are now the prime concern of governments and diplomacy. Business is a sacred thing; and the test of the merit of any measure or event is the question, "How will it affect business?"

For the promotion and handling of these world-

wide business interests there have come into existence gigantic corporations, so great as to challenge the powers of government. This is one of the most significant developments of these times. Within less than a generation the individual, as a business agent, has been superseded by an impersonal system; and one need not be a prophet to see, in the near future, these huge concerns, which now collectively control all industry, amalgamated into one colossal organization, controlling the business of the world. Unless, by some intervention of Almighty power the tendency of the age-movement is interrupted or deflected, this will very shortly come to pass. The step from the existing "trusts" to the great combine which shall embrace them all, is shorter and easier to execute than that, say, from the Carnegie Steel Company to the United States Steel Corporation.

Rev. xiii. 16, 17 speaks of a beast that is to rise up out of the earth, and that will cause all, "both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." If any one can see, in the tendencies of the times, that the development of a

corporate monster whose trade-mark will have this universal scope is close at hand, he will be able to realize how very near we are to the end of this present age; for this age will have ended, and "He who now letteth" (hindereth) will have been "taken out of the way," before this beast comes into existence.

Of such importance have the world-interests now become that a serious international attempt to secure universal peace has been set on foot. The aim, however, of the Hague Conferences will not be attained in that way, because "the Scripture must needs be fulfilled"; and men may cry "Peace, peace," but there will be no peace until the Prince of Peace comes in person to earth. Nevertheless, the "Peace Conference" is a striking sign of the development of "the world," and is one of the indications that "the age of the world" is drawing to a close.

Not only are the "large business interests" demanding that their paramount importance be recognized, and that governments shall seek by convention to ensure them against the perils of war, but the broader idea of a "Confederacy of Nations" has come into existence. A tentative constitution has been put forth, modelled on the constitution

of the United States, defining the powers to be surrendered by each nation to the Central Government, prescribing the duties and powers of the "World-President," the "World-Congress," and the "World-Judiciary." This idea may, of course, prove to be utterly chimerical; for while prophecy is clear that a world-power (the revived Roman Empire) will come into existence in the next age, it is more likely to be as the result of great wars than of peaceful conventions. Nevertheless, the fact that there has now been launched into the sea of current ideas the notion of such an organization as the Federation of Nations, is very significant.

The rapid progress of these world-ideas is clearly set forth in an address given recently (November, 1907) before the eighth annual "Religious Conference," held at Poughkeepsie, New York, and attended by three hundred Christian and Jewish ministers. The address was delivered by a minister of the so-called "Reformed Church." The substance of it was a glowing eulogy of "religion," wholly apart from Christ and the Scriptures, as "the breath of God, the life of man, the heat of the heart, the vigour of the will, the liveness of the conscience, the one great hope of human nature." "Surely this," said

the speaker, "is the glorious thought which we gain as we view THE ESTABLISHED FACT OF MAN'S SOLIDARITY."

The following passages in this highly characteristic address are particularly in point:—

> "We have been introduced, through the revelations of *science*, one of the hand-maidens of God, to a new universe."

This "new universe," to which we have been introduced through the revelations of science, is a very different affair from the new creation into which the redeemed soul is introduced through the revelation of God in Christ Jesus.[a]

> "We begin, therefore, to realize as never before the great fact of the SOLIDARITY OF MAN. Society, as a great, throbbing, life-giving organism, is slowly finding its rightful place in our thought."

Undoubtedly there is a prodigious movement in progress which corresponds to what is here stated. It is the "age of the world," and the world is rapidly assuming its final shape. The following passage states this fact with great verbal precision, though the speaker was in complete ignorance of the spiritual significance of what he was describing:—

[a] 2 Cor. v. 17.

"But national joy because of national growth and development is not comparable to that joy which comes to the man who has eyes to see, as he beholds the tremendous changes for good, which are revolutionizing the wide, wide world. There is possible now to every heart of love a joy which stops not at national boundary lines. We see gradually forming World Thoughts, World Ideals, a World Conscience. Brotherhood begins to have a World Meaning. The solidarity of man is for the first time being deeply realized. To be alive now, and witness this mighty movement of Men which must eventuate in a sense of real and abiding brotherhood, is a blessing for which to be profoundly grateful.

"This world movement, having its source in the eternal God, is the real cause which brings together men of different beliefs to study together their common needs. The great doctrines of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man have been proclaimed to men through many centuries, but they are now being held by men as Veritable Truths from

> HEAVEN. Their triumph is not yet. But who can be alive to present-day realities without having his heart thrill with the innumerable evidences that man's brotherhood, rooted in God's Fatherhood, is beginning to sway the best thought of the world?"

Our Scriptures, therefore, tell us that, of this vast and complicated system called "the world," which seeks to bring within its scope the energies of all mankind, professing the laudable aim of bettering humanity, Satan is the animating and energizing spirit, working effectively in the children of disobedience; and that he is also the governing prince. We give here a literal rendering of Eph. ii. 1–3: "And you, being dead in offences and sins, in which once ye walked according to the age of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conduct once, in the desires of our flesh, doing the things willed of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were, by nature, children of wrath, even as the rest."

It was in this vast system, filled with "the unfruitful works of darkness," that we believers once had our entire conversation, that is, our conduct and

behaviour; fulfilling, not the purpose of God, which is far removed from these things, but the desires of the flesh and of the mind, that is, doing the things willed by the old nature and suggested by the thoughts of the unrenewed mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. There was then no difference between us and those who are now absorbed by these things. We once walked in full accordance with the age of this world, in full sympathy with all its projects and enterprises, sharing its hopes, striving for its honours and rewards, believing in its ultimate triumph, in full accordance with the purpose of the mighty being who planned this great system and who furnishes the energies for the conduct of its complex affairs—the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

But now (verses 4–10), quickened and raised with Christ by the mighty power of God, we may, from our place in the heavenlies in Christ, survey this vast, struggling system at a distance, having no part at all in its doings, but being occupied in those "good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This is the wondrous truth unfolded in Ephesians ii. 1–10. May we

believe it, receive it, and walk for the little time that remains, in its sanctifying power!

We now pursue the inquiry further in order to ascertain, from the Word of Truth, what is the chief object which the spirit and prince of the world is seeking to effect, and what are the methods employed by him in his effort to accomplish it.

The "God of this Age" and his Object

A clear answer to this branch of our inquiry is given in 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. In the preceding chapter the apostle compares the ministration of the law with that of the gospel, leading up to the great fact that the veil, which was upon the minds of the children of Israel when they read the Scriptures, had been done away in Christ;[a] so that now, under the ministry of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, and in the liberty which He brings, believers may, with unveiled face behold, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, and while so occupied be changed, by the power of the Lord, the Spirit, into the same image. Then, in chapter iv., Paul, as a minister of this gospel, explains that, notwithstanding the removal of the veil, there

[a] 2 Cor. iii. 14.

are still blinded minds, from whom the gospel is veiled. And he traces this fact at once to its source in the spirit of the world, giving that personage now the title of the "god of this age." This title is most appropriate here, for the subject is the contrast between the preceding age of the law, with its ministration of condemnation and death, and the present age of the gospel with its ministration of righteousness and of life. The truth which here comes into view is that Satan was not the god of *that* age; but has become. through the action of the leaders of this age in crucifying the Lord of Glory,[a] the god of *this* age. So we read:—

> "And even if our gospel be veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing; in whom the god of this age hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them."[b]

This very important statement tells us, first, that Satan's chief occupation as the god of this age is to blind the minds of the unbelieving; and second, that his purpose in so doing is to prevent the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ from dawning upon them.

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 8. [b] R.V. (*marg.*).

Before considering the business of the god of this age, and the marvellous skill and energy which he displays in conducting it, we would direct attention for a moment to the expression "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." The gospel, or good news of the GLORY of Christ, is a thing distinct from the gospel or good news of the grace of God, which is the gospel of God concerning His Son, risen from among the dead, and to which Paul was specially "separated."[a] The latter gospel is the proclamation of forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who confess Christ Jesus as Lord, and who believe in their hearts that God has raised Him from among the dead.[b] The former, that is the "gospel of the glory of Christ," refers more particularly to a coming age, which will be pre-eminently the age of "the glory of Christ," because in that age He will be glorified, not only in heaven, as at present, but also in earth. A similar expression occurs in Titus ii. 13 (R.V.): "Looking for the appearing of the glory." Also in Rom. viii. 21 (R.V.) we are told that creation itself is eagerly looking forward to the age when it "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption unto the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

[a] See Rom. i. 1–5. [b] Rom. x. 9.

We are also referred to this coming age of the glory, in Col. iii. 4: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." The period of the "glory of Christ" is thus clearly defined as a coming age.

Now the special significance of this is, that, in that future age when the glory of Christ will be in the earth, and when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of His glory as the waters cover the sea,[a] Satan will not be a god, but a prisoner, shorn of all his power and dignity. He well knows that, when the gospel of the glory of Christ dawns upon a soul, the glories of the present age fade away, and the age and its god lose their hold upon that soul. His prime object, therefore, is, by any means and at any cost, to keep the minds of men so occupied with this present age and its affairs and interests as to exclude the light of that age to come. In pursuing this object, he employs the same means that he tried upon our Lord in the struggle in the wilderness, where he showed Him "all the kingdoms of the world and the *glory* of them." We have only to look about us, not only in the unbelieving mass, but also in the professing Church, to see how successful

[a] Hab. ii. 14

the god of this age has been, and is, in enlisting the interests, the efforts, and the hopes of men in the projects of this present age—blinding their minds, and dazzling their eyes with the cheap glitter of its transient glories, and thereby shutting out of their souls "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ."

The Projects and Achievements of this Present Age

Having now been instructed by the Word of Truth as to the personality of the Spirit of the World, who is also the god of this age, and having learned what is his general purpose and policy, let us look at the activities and achievements of this present age in the light of this teaching. We will, I am sure, be struck by the fact that those activities and achievements are most admirably designed to secure the success of what Scripture declares to be the object of the god of this age.

Giving the fullest credit to man for all that he is accomplishing in man's day, we must concede that it is a day of great progress in discoveries and inventions, particularly in such as tend to add to the comforts and pleasures of life (that is, for all who

have the means to indulge in them), and such as tend to make the earth a more suitable abiding place for mankind. It is manifest, at a glance, that whatever success is achieved along these lines adds to the glory of the present age, and to the contentment of mankind with its conditions. It is, of course, an undeniable fact that only a very small number of people are able to secure the full benefit of these newly developed comforts, luxuries, and enjoyments; but then the toiling millions are comforted by the oft-repeated assurance that their condition is far better than that of their predecessors, and, furthermore, that these things are the prizes by which ability and industry are rewarded, and for which all are encouraged to contend. We see men, in all classes of life, day after day acting under this incentive, forgetting those things that are before, and reaching feverishly for those things that are dangled before their eyes, as they press toward the prizes of the low calling of the world which lieth in the evil one.

It must also be conceded that this is an age of unprecedented advancement of the practical arts and industries, the leading nations of the earth having enacted special laws for the promotion of the useful arts. It is an age of steam and electricity, of rapid

movement of men and merchandise, of instantaneous communication to the ends of the earth; an age of wireless telegraphy and horseless carriage, of turbine engine and electric generator. All these things, and many others, combine to give to this age its special character, and to bring out the Divine aptness of its designation as emphatically "man's day."

If we go still further into details and ask what are the particular triumphs of the age, and especially what are those latest achievements which render our own times so illustrious, the spirit of the world would direct attention to the faster railway trains, the larger and swifter steamboats, taller buildings, more powerful battleships, more automatic machinery, more destructive guns and explosives; to the more numerous and potent corporations, the great increase of wealth, the gigantic manufacturing enterprises, increased commerce, colossal individual fortunes, etc., etc.

We do not hear it contended that the age is conspicuous for righteousness, or that the dominating motives of men are purer and more unselfish than those of bygone days.

What, then, is "progress"? Is it faster railway trains, bigger steamboats, more powerful battle-

ships, more crowded cities, more numerous accidents, increases in crimes, insanity, and suicides, vaster fortunes, taller buildings? We have already, in New York City, twenty-four-story buildings; but these towering structures have not raised the standards of honesty, decency, and civic righteousness. They have not brought men nearer to God. A forty-six-story building is now in course of erection. When completed, will the standards of life be raised? How tall must buildings be; what speed must trains and automobiles attain; how far must the influence and reach of the great corporations extend; how many "Dreadnoughts" must be put into commission—before men become righteous, and cease to be lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, and lovers of themselves, rather than lovers of God?

It is not difficult to understand what this all means if we are willing to turn the light of Scripture upon the world-system, and to "believe in the light." All these things of which men boast, upon which they are toiling so arduously, so pathetically, and to which they are looking so credulously to transform the world and make it a tolerable abiding place for humanity, have, back of them, the directing agency of the god of this age, and are carried forward with

the single purpose of blinding men's minds, so that they shall not look for the coming glory of Christ, but for a glory to be reached by the advancement of civilization. The object aimed at is to deceive men into looking, not for the coming of Christ as the only thing that will bring blessing to the earth and its inhabitants, but to the working out of a few more centuries of progress, of prosperity, of science, of education, civilization, legislation, sanitation, and medication. These are the things to which we are bidden to look for the deliverance of humanity from its wretchedness, sorrow, pain, misery, poverty, disease, and vice. The surest way to divert one's attention from the glory of the coming age is to occupy him in the attempt to glorify the present age.

These age-movements are charged with a tremendous power of deception: so much so, that many of the wisest and best of men have been, and are, deluded into the belief that the condition of the world-system is really improving, and that eventually, as the result of the gradual operation of these beneficent movements, humanity will be delivered from its wretched plight. Such deceptive power has this teaching that many who profess faith in God's Word believe the gospel of the age, notwithstanding the many

declarations of that Word that the present age will close, not in world-wide peace, righteousness, and contentment, but in the most awful state of wickedness, violence, and apostasy that the world has ever witnessed.

There are many expressions which pass currently without question, and which exert a blinding power of deception upon the minds of God's people. One of the commonest of these deceiving phrases is "Christian Civilization." There is no such thing as "Christian Civilization." The two words are as incongruous as "Christian" and "Science"; and it was a great stroke of the spirit of the world to couple them together. Christ has nothing to do with Civilization, and His return to earth will bring it to an end. So long as the Church remained faithful to Him, Civilization was her relentless foe; and Civilization wears its Christian garb as an evidence of the Church's shameful betrayal of Christ to the world. Christ and Civilization have nothing in common. It has removed Him from the world which hated Him, and when next they come into collision, He will destroy the last vestige of it from off the earth.

If we would get a fairly accurate picture of our

"Christian" civilization, we must seek it from an intelligent and impartial heathen. A Chinese Ambassador to England, on his return to his own country, published the results of his observations in this "Christian" and "civilized" land. Among other shrewd observations he said:—

> "The English are a hard-working race, and they have millions of devices for getting money. If one man invents a machine and makes a fortune, his neighbours immediately set to work to make another that shall excel it, and carry off the coveted gains. When there is a possibility of making money, no inquiry is too insignificant or too laborious for an Englishman to make, no journey too long or too dangerous."

After giving an account of his visit to the Polytechnic Institute in London, and of the wonders he saw, this gentleman adds:—

> "Thus MECHANICAL CONTRIVANCE is what Englishmen call true knowledge; and in their view, our holy doctrine (Confucianism) is mere useless and empty talk. . . . But this 'true knowledge' of theirs simply consists of various feats of deft manipulation; KNOW-

LEDGE THAT CAN TURN OUT A MACHINE, nothing more. . . . The Doctrine handed down to us from holy men of old may be summed up in two words, Humanity and Justice. . . . A man who follows the precepts of humanity and justice is beautiful in his speech and admirable in his actions. The great object of these two virtues is conformity to the principles which should rule the relations between prince and officer, father and son, older and younger brothers, husband and wife, friend and friend. If Europeans, in truth, understood the duties arising from these five great relationships, we should certainly discern the effect in their lives; . . . . peace and order would reign supreme; there would be no angry rivalry or unrestrained greed, or making use of deadly weapons to bring destruction on mankind.

"But do we see these results in western lands? No, indeed! Their whole energy is centred in the manufacture of different kinds of machines; steam vessels and locomotives to bring rapid returns of profit, and guns and rifles to slay their fellowmen. They rival one another in greed, and in cunning methods of

acquiring wealth. They say they are rich and mighty; and put it all down to their 'true knowledge,' forsooth!

"But from the time heaven was spread out and the earth came into existence, China can boast of a continuous line of great men, so that the people's wants have been better supplied each day than the one before it; and our language immeasurably excels those of Europe in strength and depth. *Property* is wealth to the foreigner; *moderation in his desires* to the Chinese. Material power is might to the foreigner; to live and to let live is might to the Chinese. But the heaping up of words fails to explain these principles. China forbids strange devices (machinery) in order to prevent confusion; she encourages humanity and justice as the very foundation of good government; and this will be her policy for ever. Yet foreigners say that such principles are profitless. Profitless indeed! Profitable, rather, beyond expression!"*

* Quoted in *Pastor Hsi*, by Mrs Howard Taylor. (Morgan & Scott, Ltd., London.)

Who will dare to say that this comparison is unjust? This poor "benighted heathen" tests our pursuits, and tests the aim and object of the great world-system, not by the full light of Scripture (which we are here trying to do), but by the glimmering twilight of the wisdom and ethics of a long past age. Even by that feeble light the utter inadequacy of the world-system to minister to the soul of man, and the grovelling nature of its aims, stand clearly revealed. To develop "a machine" is indeed the great object of all this mighty effort and intense striving. The aim of the heathen wisdom, carefully treasured and handed down from generation to generation, is much nearer than that of modern Civilization to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Oh that the Church had been as jealous of her treasure—the faith once for all committed to the saints—as these heathen have been of theirs!

The aim of the teachings of Confucius is to produce the "princely man," perfect in all his relations to state, city, family, and neighbours. And the gifts which Christ bestowed on His Church are to be exercised "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto

a PERFECT MAN, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."[a]

That heathen country possesses, in the national ideals which it has cherished and has faithfully transmitted without change for twenty-five centuries, an object worthy of attainment, but without any knowledge of the power whereby alone it can be attained. On the other hand, the nations of the west have had a distinct and clear revelation of the mighty power of God which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. Yet these nations have, one and all, turned aside from the plan and purpose of "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,"[b] and are bending all their national energies to the furtherance of the plans and purposes of "the god of this age," according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now energizes in the sons of disobedience.

In the day when the Son of Man shall gather all nations before Him (Joel iii. 2; Matt. xxv. 32) how heavy will be the condemnation of those nations which, having received the light, nevertheless preferred the darkness because their deeds were evil!

[a] Eph. iv. 13. [b] Eph. i. 17.

But the present age and its leaders do not ignore or neglect those conditions which oppose the happiness and well-being of humanity; on the contrary, the age abounds in efforts and expedients to relieve them. The age is quite prolific in humanitarian, reformatory, remedial, and benevolent enterprises. The influences which crime, poverty, and disease exert in retarding "progress" are too glaring to admit of their being ignored and neglected. It is just at this point that people are most thoroughly deceived as to the character of the age, and it is from these reformatory and corrective enterprises that arguments are drawn to show that the age is good in its main purpose, and that it is constantly getting better. The Word of God, however, designates the age as "this present evil age,"[a] and the truth is that the best features of the age are its worst. This will be apparent to everyone who will keep in mind the point in controversy in this age between the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the god of this world. The precise question in dispute is this, Is Christ necessary to the world and to man? God says: "Yes; without Christ the world lies in darkness, death, and sin: and without Him there can

[a] Gal. i. 4.

be no peace on the earth, and no deliverance for creation from its burden." The spirit of the world says: "No; the world does not need Christ, but can and does get along very well without Him"; and in proof of this he points to the splendid progress the world is making, and particularly to the many benevolences, temperance movements, hospitals, medicinal remedies, and other helpful expedients which are assisting humanity in its upward progress. He further promises that peace shall be established in the earth through arbitration, disarmament propositions, and peace conferences.

God says that without His Son there is for the individual soul no life, light, or liberty; that whoso hath the Son hath life, and whoso hath not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. Satan says that the knowledge of Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, is not necessary to salvation and eternal life; and he points to the flourishing religious systems and their throngs of earnest devotees, who are "working out their own salvation" without God working in them, or are trusting in universal salvation or in a probation after death.

God says that Christ is not only needed for the life of every man, but that He is sufficient for all

who come to Him; and that He, and He alone, can satisfy the desires of the quickened soul and the renewed mind. Satan says: "Not so; even if one be a Christian, he can none the less find his gratifications in my system"; and in proof of this he points to the thousands of "Christians" participating with zest in the pleasures, diversions, and pastimes of the world, joining hands indiscriminately with those who reject Christ, and giving themselves up to merry-making and amusements in a world where their Saviour and Lord endured only suffering, and which is stained with the guilt of His blood.

When the diametrically opposite and mutually antagonistic purposes of God and of Satan in this age are thus considered, is it not clear that whatever tends to make man oblivious of his need of Christ, and satisfied with a world that has rejected Him, is only and unqualifiedly evil? Is it not clear, in the light of these conflicting purposes, that the institutions and activities of the world that seem to be best, are in fact its worst?

The respective aims of the two spirits who are engaged in this age-long controversy are so radically opposed, that they have, and can have, nothing in common. In one word, the spirit of the world seeks

to improve the world and to better the condition of those who are in it; the Spirit of God seeks to convict the world of sin, and to show men how to get out of it.

It is clear, then, that the best things of the age—its philanthropies, reforms, and remedial agencies—are the most effective of all of the devices of the enemy for blinding the minds of those who do not believe the Word of God as to the evil character of the age. *We do not say that it is an evil thing in itself to seek to better humanity and to reform vicious lives; but it is evil to set up any means for accomplishing these ends as a substitute for Christ.* Anything which promises improvement to the world apart from the personal coming of Christ, or to the individual apart from a change of nature through faith in Him, is in direct opposition to God's plan of redemption, and in particular to His special work in this age.

If, for example, through the efforts of a temperance society, a poor drunkard, by being induced to sign a pledge and to trust in its efficacy or in his own ability to keep it, and by being surrounded by safeguards and wholesome influences, is enabled to shake off the habit of drink, that man has been taught

that he can do something for himself, and can get along without Christ: whereas, if let alone, he might have discovered that his trouble was not drink, but sin, that he could do nothing for himself; and thus be brought to Him who is mighty to save, whose blood cleanses from all sin, and whose Spirit delivers from all evil habits.

The Scriptural method of relieving such a case (or that of any slave of sin, whatever form the sin may take) is to teach the poor victim of evil that he can do nothing for himself, and that there is no help for him in man; but that salvation is of the Lord, and that God will save and deliver from sin those who believe on His Son.

In pronouncing a thing good or evil, man judges by its effect on the individual and on society. God judges entirely by relation of the motive to Christ. The rule of Christian activity is very simple. It is, "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him";[a] and "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."[b] "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."[c]

[a] Col. iii. 17. [b] 1 Cor. x. 31. [c] 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

An incident which furnishes an illustration, on a large scale, of the truth which we are now considering, has figured quite prominently of late in the newspapers, in which the world chronicles its great doings and expresses its intense admiration of itself. A very large sum of money (ten million dollars) has been lately set aside by a person who is doubtless sincerely desirous of benefiting mankind, which fund is to be called the "S—— Foundation," after the name of the founder. This enormous fund is to be devoted to the following declared object, namely:—

> "To investigate and study the causes of adverse social conditions, including ignorance, poverty, and vice; to suggest how these conditions can be remedied, or ameliorated, and to put in operation any appropriate means to that end."

Man, in his day, has devised many methods of salvation. We have had salvation by character-building, by education, by college endowments, and by sanitary tenements; and recently another millionaire has been diligently devoting himself and his immense fortune to the salvation of humanity by means of free public libraries and

free concerts. But here we are to have, from the "foundation" up, a scheme of salvation by the mammon of unrighteousness. And why not? Is not money thought to be all powerful? Do not men, consciously or unconsciously, make it a god to set their affections upon and in which they put their trust? If we take up any religious paper, or go into any religious gathering, is it not impressed upon us that the great need of the Lord's work is money, and would we not almost be led to believe that He is either unable or unwilling to give it proper support?—But surely there is no lack of money to carry on all the "good works which *God* has before prepared for us to walk in."[a] He has given His people abundant means to carry on all the work which *He* has charged them to do, which is to proclaim remission of sins unto all nations in the name of the Lord Jesus.[b] Through the efforts of a single man, and in the space of a few years, the gospel was fully preached from Jerusalem round about even unto Illyricum.[c] But the trouble has been that the Lord's people have dissipated, and are now dissipating, their energies and resources in many unfruitful enterprises which He has not set

[a] Eph. ii. 10. [b] Luke xxiv. 47. [c] Rom. xv. 19.

on foot, and which tend only to better that world-system which He has condemned.

It should be especially noted that this great financial project for the betterment of the doomed world rests upon the fundamental assumption that, in this "enlightened age," the causes of "adverse social conditions, including ignorance, poverty, and vice," are unknown; for the very first work of those whose privilege it will be to spend the income of this enormous fund, is to investigate and ascertain the causes of these evil conditions. What an indictment of the boasted enlightenment and progress of the age, that, not only do these appalling evils exist, but that their causes are unknown!

Why inaugurate a study of the causes of human wretchedness, ignorance, and vice, when God's Word has plainly declared that the cause of it all is Sin! And if God's testimony on this point be set aside, how will the learned professors, sociologists, investigators, alienists, statisticians, etc., etc., proceed to ascertain what disease the world is really afflicted with? Will they make microscopical examinations of disease germs? Will they conduct nocturnal "slumming" tours? Will they collate and tabulate statistics of crime, insanity, illiteracy, etc.? Have

not all these things been done? and is the age any wiser or any better for them?

Certainly it is of the greatest importance that men should know the reason for the existence of evil in human nature; but if the explanation given in the Word of God be rejected, and if God's remedy for evil be set aside, then the case of humanity is hopeless.

What a sad mistake, therefore, and what a setting aside of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, to employ sinful men and set them to work devising and putting into operation remedies for these existing evils! What folly and presumption to seek to provide a "foundation" of money on which to build the salvation of men, when God's Word declares that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ";[a] and again: "forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, with silver and gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ."[b]

From the world's point of view this is an admirable use of money, and if it succeeds to any extent in accomplishing its avowed purpose, it will confirm the

[a] 1 Cor. iii. 11. [b] 1 Pet. i. 18, 19 (R.V.).

world in its belief that it can dispense with Christ, and that it has no need of His atonement for sin. But the people of the world will not be alone in commending this and like uses of money; Christians too, who neglect their Bibles, will join in admiring it. But in the light of God's truth it can only be pronounced evil, because it is based in unbelief of the Word of God, and because it involves the denial of the sufficiency of Christ's atoning work.

Thus if we apply to the works of the world the test whether or not they tend to the accomplishment of God's purpose in this age, we must arrive at the conclusion that the works of the world are, without exception, what our Lord declared them to be, "evil." They are, one and all, not of the Father, but of the world. Hence we are admonished—"Love not the world, neither the things in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world (the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life) is not of the Father, but is of the world."[a]

It is easy to see why the Church is made welcome in the world. Finding that the faith of Christ could not be stamped out by violence and persecution, the

[a] 1 John ii. 15, 16.

prince of this world changed his tactics, and has sought to accomplish the ruin and corruption of the Church by seduction; and at the same time to harness up the corrupted religion with the other forces which are drawing the triumphal car of the progress of the age. Thus the Church became, centuries ago, and has been ever since, an institution *in* the world, instead of an assembly separated *out* of it; and Christian people have been, and are, taught that their duty is, not to testify to the incurable evil of the world and its certain destruction, but to engage in its many schemes of reform and in the efforts to improve it. This is, doubtless, the greatest success which the god of this age has achieved in all his brilliant career; for his great power and ingenuity are displayed, not so much in the resorts of the vicious, or even in the doings of a frivolous and Christless society, as in enlisting the interest and energies of Christians in the temperance movements, reforms, and philanthropies of the age; and in bringing it to pass that the world occupies the pews of Christian churches, and hears, to its entire satisfaction, the creed of the age preached from their pulpits. And the creed of the age is this, namely:— that man is now upon the high road to a state

of blessedness and contentment, which state is to be brought about through its own efforts and ingenuity; that while there are yet a few things amiss in the world, and a few evils to be remedied, these things are even now being overcome; and that the progress of the age is not only satisfactory, but is a theme for continual praise to the glory of man's courage, power, and persistence.

So widely has this gospel been preached, and so readily does it commend itself to the vainglory of man, that it has led to the very popular doctrine of post-millennialism, the hope of which is that Christ cannot return to earth for at least a thousand years, and perhaps many more; so that those now living need not be concerned about His coming. According to this teaching, the earth is to enjoy a millennium *without* Christ; and certainly that period of universal blessing and contentment is yet a long way off, if man's efforts are to bring it about.

It was recently declared from the pulpit of one of our prominent churches, that the return of Christ at this juncture of the world's affairs would be nothing less than a calamity, since it would interrupt the splendid progress of the age.

It may assist in making clear to some readers'

minds that the character of the age is evil, if we point out that what makes a thing "good" is God's presence in it. God's power is not in the works of the world, nor is His glory their aim. Hence they are evil, regardless of their results.

And how evil the age is in God's sight, may be gauged by the fact that Christ died to deliver us from it, according to the will of God. No words can picture the depths of wickedness of a system which is so evil in God's sight that the giving up of His own Son was not too great a price to pay for our deliverance from it. For Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of God and our Father, to Whom be glory to the ages of the ages. Amen." [a]

How, then, can the soul that has been quickened by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ take part in the affairs of a dead world, where dead sinners are occupied with dead works? They are commanded to have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." [b] Yet many Christians are there among the dead, and, while themselves alive, they are sleeping among the dead, and dreaming a

[a] Gal. i. 4, 5. [b] Eph. v. 11.

strange dream of the glorious progress of this dead world to a condition of unmixed blessedness. To these the imperative call of the Spirit is: "Awake! thou that sleepest, and rise up from among the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee!"

The Leaders of the Age

While Satan is the energizing spirit and the reigning prince of the world, the affairs of the latter are, of course, managed by the prominent men of each generation. The character of this present age, and the general course of the age-movement, has been determined by the action of those who first assumed the leadership of the age. These gave their most unqualified and defiant affirmance to the doctrine that the world does not need Christ, but is better off without Him.

These leaders (or "rulers," or "princes") are named in 1 Cor. ii. 8; and their first act, which has shaped the course of the entire age-movement, is there stated. We give the literal rendering of verses 6–8.

> "We speak wisdom among the full-grown, not that of this age, nor of the rulers (or

> leaders) of this age, but the hidden wisdom which God determined before the ages, and which none of the rulers of this age had come to know; for had they known it, they would not in that case have crucified the LORD of GLORY."

The first act, then, of the leaders of this age was to crucify the Lord of Glory. This was a forcible expression of the policy of the prince of this world. It was a declaration not only that the world did not need Christ, and that it desired nothing of His doctrine or of Himself, but that the principles of His Kingdom, as stated in His teaching, were hostile to and destructive of those of the world. These age-leaders comprehended the situation fully, and they dealt with it accordingly. They did not entertain an exaggerated view of the danger which, in the person of this Man, threatened the institutions of the world, its government, its religion, and its wisdom. They charged that He was a menace to the throne of Cæsar, which was the throne of the world. They had heard Him disputing with and silencing the Sadducees, the rationalists of that day.[a] He had also, in unmeasured terms, denounced the

[a] Matt. xxii. 23–34.

religious leaders of the time, charging upon them what those who set themselves up to be religious leaders of the age have ever since been doing, namely, making the Word of God of none effect through their tradition. Speaking to them on one occasion, He said: "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you, hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For, laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, . . . making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition." [a]

His teachings, moreover, were a menace to the progress of the world, which depends upon the fierce struggle of competition for the riches and honours of the world. The universal application of the golden rule, and of the principles set forth in what is called the "sermon on the mount," would bring the progress of the world to a standstill. Those leaders of the age instinctively felt the danger; and though they may not have understood it in detail, doubtless the prince of this world, whose bidding they were doing, comprehended it fully. This Man

[a] Mark vii. 6–13.

was a menace to the world and to all its institutions, and He must be disposed of.

In view of all this, we can understand the action of all those who took part in the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory, and who thus became the leaders of the ensuing age. They were first, the Romans, who were the political leaders of the time; second, the Greeks, who were the intellectual leaders, the rulers of the world's wisdom and culture; and third, the most prominent of all in that transaction, the Jews, who were the religious and moral leaders of the time. As an expression of the concurrence of all these in what was done that day, the earthly title of our Lord was inscribed upon His cross, in these three languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

Thus the Kingdom, announced by John the Baptist and proclaimed by the King Himself, was rejected with murderous violence; and now the rejected One is gone "into a far country to receive for Himself a Kingdom, and to return,"[a] and when He returns it will be not in weakness, but with "power and great glory."[b]

Meanwhile, those who crucified Him became the first leaders of an age whose progress would have

[a] Luke xix. 12. [b] Luke xxi. 27.

been completely checked by His presence. The age has been allowed to take its course; and since God, in the person of the Son, has been, by the concurrent action of the leaders of the age, excluded from its affairs, it has been, in the fullest sense, "Man's Day."

It need hardly be said that the attitude of the political, intellectual, and religious leaders of the age towards the Lord of Glory has not changed in the least since the day they put Him to death. Let us not be deceived as to this by appearances. The seeming friendliness of the world does not indicate the slightest change of heart. Let us not forget that the scribes complimented Him when He answered the Sadducees to their satisfaction, and that Pilate himself declared that there was no fault in Him; yet they delivered Him to the executioners. Moreover, the world has not in our day to deal with a Church which faithfully bears the testimony of Christ "that the works thereof are evil," but with a Church which has become thoroughly corrupt and apostate, which declares the works of the world to be, not evil, but praiseworthy and commendable, and which participates heartily in them. Indeed, one need not look very closely to discover that the "leaders of the age" are in many instances the "pillars of the (professing) Church."

THE OPPOSING SPIRITS

We have learned from 1 Cor. ii. 12 that there is a "spirit of the world." That passage teaches, further, the antagonism between that spirit and the Spirit of God, and it also teaches the nature of the controversy between them. We quote it again:—

> "For we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

The contrast between these two spirits will more forcibly appear if we take this Scripture in connexion with John xiv. 17, where our Lord speaks of "The Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." Believers have not received the spirit of the world, and therefore are not subject to him. But that is not all; they *have* received the Spirit of God. On the other hand, the world has not received the Spirit of God. And that is not all: it cannot receive Him. It is not possible that the world should receive Him. There never was a more foolish notion than that of a converted

world. Our Lord Himself declared that it was impossible for the world to receive the Holy Spirit; and He is in the earth, not to convert the world, but to take out of it those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

It follows that the believer, who is indwelt by the Spirit of God, can have no friendly intercourse with the world without unfaithfulness to God, which is spiritual adultery. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"[a]

It follows, further, that the world cannot possibly have anything in common with the Church of Christ, or share in any measure her interests, hope, and destiny. The completion of the Church, the body of Christ, will be the signal for her removal from the earth, and for the outpouring of the flood of Divine judgments. How utterly absurd, then, to suppose that the world and its prince would aid in hastening this event! Of course, the man of the world does not understand this, and very probably would laugh at the idea of the resurrection from among the dead, and the removal from the world

[a] James iv. 4. See also Jer. iii. 1, 6–9; Ezek. xxiii. 1–37, etc.

of the living and sleeping saints.[a] But the prince of the world understands it perfectly, and he has the same interest (and much more) to detain the Church on earth that Pharaoh had to detain Israel in Egypt.

The passage then states that the purpose for which we have received the Spirit of God is "that we may know (become acquainted with) the things that are freely given to us of God." This brings before us again the nature of the spiritual contest of the age. The spirit of the world is putting forth every device—by multiplying the attractions of the world, and particularly by supplying it with things that will attract the religiously inclined—to blind the minds of the unbelieving, and to distract the minds of Christians from "the things which are Jesus Christ's,"[b] "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."[c] The Holy Spirit, on the contrary, is seeking to make us acquainted with "the things of God,"[d] and thus to take our minds and thoughts away from the things of the world.

The believer is thus in the position of one who has become the heir of a great estate, including property and riches and priceless gems of every sort,

[a] 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52; 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.
[b] Phil. ii. 21. [c] 1 Cor. ii. 9. [d] 1 Cor. ii. 11.

but who is in a far country and utterly ignorant of his inheritance. Moreover, he had come under the dominion of the prince of that country, and his master is using every means in his power to keep him in ignorance of his inheritance, knowing that, should he learn and believe the truth, it will mean the loss of his services. But God has met the needs of this situation by sending His Spirit into that far country, and the believer has received the Spirit of God, whom the world cannot receive, in order that he may get to know the things which belong to him, and which none of the princes of this age know. Every verse of this chapter,[a] from the ninth to the fifteenth inclusive, contains a reference to "the things" which can be revealed only by the Spirit of God; and it is a shame that any child of God, to whom the Spirit is given, should be so taken up with the temporal things of the world as to be ignorant of the eternal things of God. Verses 9 and 10 speak of the things which have not been seen, or heard, or imagined, but which God has prepared for them that love Him, and which He has revealed unto us by His Spirit; and in this verse we are given an assurance of the power of the Spirit to do

[a] 1 Cor. ii.

this, by the statement that "the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God." Verse 11 states that these things of God are beyond the knowledge of the natural man, so that they cannot be learned except by the Spirit; for "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Verses 12 and 13 state that we have received the Spirit in order that we may know these things, and moreover that they are set forth in the apostolic writings in the very words "which the Holy Ghost teacheth," communicating spiritual things by spiritual means (or to spiritual persons, as some versions render it). And verse 14 declares that the natural (psychical or soulish) man does not receive "the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." It is an impossibility for the natural man, whose soul is unquickened and whose mind is unrenewed, to become acquainted with the things of the Spirit of God. They are "beyond his ken." It is folly to speak of them to him, or even to expect him to understand the believer's interest in them, for the reason that he is entirely lacking in "spiritual understanding."[a]

[a] Col. i. 9.

This mission of the Holy Spirit is in direct fulfilment of our Lord's promise: "When He, the Spirit of Truth, shall come, . . . He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." And then, in order to inform the disciples of the extent of those things which the Spirit was to reveal, He added, "All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I that He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you."

It would not be possible to declare more strongly than is done in these passages the complete separation that exists between the true interests, possessions, and hopes of God's people, and those of the world. Such complete separation exists in the mind of God, who has not only with His Son freely given us "all things,"[a] but has given us also His Spirit, that we may know the things which He has freely given us.

These are the statements of God; and if we believe them, shall we continue to grieve the Spirit by manifesting indifference to the things of God, and by minding the things of the world?

But we wish to speak later on of the two classes of "things" which the two opposing spirits are

[a] Rom. viii. 32.

respectively bringing to the attention of men. The point which we would here keep prominently in view is the antagonism between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world.

THE SPIRIT OF ERROR

These two spirits are again contrasted in 1 John iv. 5, 6, where they are named respectively the "Spirit of Truth" and the "Spirit of Error." The apostle says:—

"They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."

In these New Testament epistles, which contain Church doctrine, and which are letters from and to members of the household of God, "we" and "you" always refer to members of the family, those who have been born of God by the Word and Spirit; and "they" refers to outsiders, those who are not the children of God by new birth.

They who "are of the world" speak of the world; that is, they make the world their theme. In fact, they have nothing else to talk about. All their interests, pleasure, and hopes are in the world, and

naturally they speak of the world; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." [a]

Not only so, but when they who belong to the world make the world their theme, "the world heareth them." Wherever the world is made the subject of the discourse, and its aims and achievements, its progress and its civilization are extolled, the speaker is sure of an attentive, appreciative, and contented audience. Consequently, when the world is made the theme of the pulpit, the world will go to church, and will extend to the preacher its approval and support. The reports which the Monday newspapers in any of our large cities publish of the sermons delivered on the preceding day, will show how very generally the principle stated in 1 John iv. 5 is understood and acted upon in these days.

The proper topic of conversation and discourse for the child of God is, not the world and its doings and sayings, but his Father's works and words. "Talk ye of all His wondrous works." [b] This is a theme befitting the conversation of the child of God; and if the words of God are in his heart, he will speak about them, on the principle stated by our Lord in Matt. xii. 34 quoted above.

[a] Matt. xii. 34. [b] Ps. cv. 2.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."[a] In other words, they are to be a continual subject of conversation between those that belong to the Lord. And we know that when the people did this, then "the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His Name."[b]

Returning now to our passage, the Apostle John continues:—

"We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us. Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Error."

Here are the two spirits mentioned again in direct antagonism. "Those that know God," says the apostle, "hear us." Those that know God are those who have eternal life.[c] Those who have come to know God, through faith in His Son, will hear what the apostle, writing by inspiration of God, has to say about the world, namely, that all that is in the

[a] Deut. vi. 6, 7. [b] Mal. iii. 16. [c] John xvii. 2.

world is not of the Father, but is of the world; and that the world and the desire thereof is not—making splendid progress, but—passing away.[a] This is the divinely prescribed test for determining whether one is filled with the Spirit of Truth or with the Spirit of Error. "Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error."

Whenever the theme is the world and its excellent progress and bright prospects, the gathering, no matter what it may be called, is under the direction of the Spirit of Error. This name is particularly appropriate here, because all the good things said about the world are erroneous. Not one of them is true.

This passage opens up an immense field of study; but we can but briefly indicate its lessons. Our Lord came into the world to bear witness to the truth. Before His coming, and since, men have been simply deluged with error and fiction in the greatest variety of forms. Christ did not come that men might be either deceived by false doctrine or entertained by works of fiction. He said to Pilate: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the

[a] 1 John ii. 16, 17.

truth."[a] At another time He declared, "I am the Truth."[b] The subject, therefore, which the Spirit of Truth has to present, is Christ, who is the Truth; and this is in harmony with all that we have learned concerning the earthly mission of the Holy Spirit. Whatever has not to do with that subject, and whatever is not of the truth, does not proceed from the Spirit of Truth, and is utterly unfit and unwholesome food for the child of God. All fiction, tales, romances, and works of the imagination, have their inspiring source, not in the Spirit of Truth, but in the Spirit of Error; and they serve admirably to aid the purpose of the latter, which, as we have seen, is to divert attention from the truth, and particularly from the truth about Christ—redemption, resurrection, holiness, glory, Satan, the world, sin, judgment, and death—and to occupy the mind with the world and its affairs.

Furthermore, the mass of fiction which issues from the press in a copious stream, especially that part of it which best suits the popular taste, aids the purpose of the Spirit of Error in another way: namely, by instilling into the minds of youthful readers false notions about the world, its honours,

[a] John xviii. 37. [b] John xiv. 6.

attractions, and pleasures. The world, in which virtue is rewarded, villainy is punished, honesty thrives, and love is triumphant, is not the real world of which Satan is the animating spirit.

The sphere of the Spirit of God is the truth; the sphere of the spirit of the world embraces everything that is not the truth. His method of gaining his end is deception. He is the one who "deceiveth the whole world" (habitable earth).[a] The world itself is a gigantic and complicated deception, whose promises are not fulfilled, whose honours quickly fade, whose prizes are cheats, whose pleasures do not satisfy, whose riches corrupt, whose praises are insincere—in which, in a word, the real value of everything is disguised and misrepresented.

The chief purpose and effect of the works of fiction and other products of the imaginations of unconverted hearts is to oppose the knowledge of Christ. A taste for novel-reading is incompatible with a taste for the Word of God. Paul realized the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and for it was willing to suffer the loss of all his worldly advantages, which were exceeding great. He said

[a] Rev. xii. 9.

"I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."[a]

The higher the products of man's imagination are exalted, and the more they are held in veneration, the more effectually do they serve to oppose the knowledge of God. Therefore, one phase of the Christian's warfare is spoken of as "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."[b]

The Spirit of Error would lead our thoughts into captivity to the imaginations of men. The Spirit of Truth would lead every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. These objects are mutually destructive.

One of the most effective instruments which the Spirit of Error employs for capturing the minds of men and deceiving them as to the character of the world, is poetry: particularly poetry which has a religious gloss. Error in the form of pleasing poetry has an extraordinary power of deception, and spreads with amazing facility. By its means the Spirit of Error succeeds in covering up the dark

[a] Phil. iii. 8. [b] 2 Cor. x. 5.

and ugly features of his system, and even in representing them as blessings in disguise. In this way he has managed to disseminate thoroughly the idea that all the sorrows, griefs, calamities, and misfortunes that befall mankind are a part of God's plan for humanity; and that even Death itself is a heavenly messenger, who summons all, saints and sinners alike, to a blissful existence in the "great beyond." "There is no death," sings one of these deluding poets, inspired by the Spirit of Error; "what seems so is transition." And another says: "There is an angel, whose name is Death." For the *believer*, there is indeed no death to face in the future, for he has already died with Christ. All have sinned, and all must die; but the believer's death is past. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that One died for all, therefore all died."[a] "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."[b] It is thus a great truth of Scripture that the believer has no death (in its real meaning, *i.e.* the penalty or wages of sin) to fear. His departure from the body is falling asleep.[c] But death itself is a hideous reality, the wages of sin, the last enemy

[a] 2 Cor. v. 14 (R.V.). [b] Col. iii. 3 (R.V.).
[c] Acts vii. 60; 1 Thess. iv. 14.

whom Christ will put under His feet. Is there anywhere a more striking evidence of the subtlety and cunning of "him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil,"[a] than is found in his success in spreading the idea that Death is a Divine messenger to be welcomed, and not a loathsome monster to be hated and feared?

There is an enormous mass of religious poetry afloat; in which comfort and hope for humanity are held forth wholly apart from Christ and His work. The doctrine which analysis will generally discover in such poems as omit the person and work of Christ, is that which is bluntly expressed in the well-known line in Pope's "Essay on Man," namely, "Whatever *is* is right"; whereas it is entirely safe to say of man and his world that whatever is is wrong. Or, as it is more majestically put in a line of Browning's, which many quote as if it were Scripture (and not a few think is Scripture), namely, "God's in His heaven, and all's well with the world"; whereas the teaching of Scripture on this point is that Satan is in heaven,[b] and that's what is ill with the world.

So the age-long contest between truth and error

[a] Heb. ii. 14. [b] Eph. vi. 12; Rev. xii. 7, etc.

proceeds, and now draws to a close. This we can with confidence assert, because the time of "strong delusions" has come, in which is seen the effect of not having received a love of the truth. No natural explanation will account for such a grotesque system of error as that called "Christian Science." The supernatural is absolutely necessary to explain it; and this is but one of the many strong delusions to which those are given over who refuse to receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. In 2 Thess. ii., Paul, after stating that the great falling away (apostasy) would come before the Day of the Lord * (and the apostasy is now clearly in view, but we cannot go into that), and that the man

*The reader is reminded that the Day of the LORD (which is the correct reading of 2 Thess. ii. 2, not "Day of Christ") covers the whole period from the rapture of the Church to the millennium; but it refers in its narrow sense to the culmination of that period in the visible appearing (*apokalupsis*) of our Lord referred to in verse 8; also in Rev. xix. 11. Since the fulness of the apostasy of the Church and the career of the man of sin are to occur in the next age, the beginning of the apostasy, which is now in plain view, indicates that the close of "this present evil age" is imminent.

of sin would also be revealed before that day come, goes on to say:—

"And now ye know what withholdeth that he (the man of sin) might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let (hinder) until he be taken out of the way. And then (that is, after the one who hinders is taken out of the way) shall that Wicked (or lawless one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth[a] and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie" (or the lie).

Let us then hold fast to the truth, and shun a lie, in whatever form it may be presented.

For, "we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true,

[a] *Cp.* Rev. xix. 15.

even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."[a]

Those in whom the Spirit of the World Works

As there are two opposing spirits spoken of in the scriptures we have examined, so are there two distinct and separate classes of human beings through whom they respectively operate, and two distinct classes of things with which they are respectively occupied.

Those in whom the Spirit of God dwells are the children of God.[b] God works in these "to will and to do of His good pleasure."[c] It is the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus who can "make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight."[d] For "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal body (this present body

[a] 1 John v. 20.

[b] Rom. viii. 9, 11, 15, 16. [c] Phil. ii. 13.

[d] Heb. xiii. 21. See also 1 Thess. v. 23.

of flesh and blood) by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."[a]

In contrast with these "children of God," in whom the Spirit of God works, we learn by Eph. ii. 2 that the prince of the power of the air is "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

We often hear in these days of the "brotherhood of man" and the "fatherhood of God." These ideas are the foundation stones in the cult of "Baha Ullah"—now pushing its way in Occidental civilization—and also figure prominently in the "New Theology." These ideas, moreover, find forcible expression in the many schemes and propositions for "religious unity" which have been set afloat within recent years. "Unity of faith" is a watchword that appeals strongly to the human mind, and it is now being agitated with great persistence in many quarters. So long as people shall agree in believing *something*, it seems to be a secondary matter *what* they shall believe. We have had one great congress of religions, taking in every shade of religious opinion; and the mission of Baha Ullah, whose cult is now becoming fashionable, is "the religious unification of all people," including "Christians, Jews, Atheists,

[a] Rom. viii. 11.

Mussulmans, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, and Brahmins." The fundamental proposition of this movement is declared by one of its propagandists to be "Divine Unity of man with God, which unity manifests itself in the brotherhood of mankind." The correspondence of this doctrine with that of the "New Theology," and that of various movements known as "New Thought," is sufficiently striking to indicate similarity of origin.

These "brotherhood of man" doctrines are an important part of the socialistic propaganda of the times; and this again is the logical outworking of "Man's Day," the great purpose of which is to glorify man through his own exertions.

But the only "brotherhood of man" of which the Scripture speaks is that mentioned in the verse quoted above, and in the succeeding verse.[a] They who compose that brotherhood are not the children of God, but "the children of disobedience," the "children of wrath." And it is Satan who is working, literally "energizing," in them. What stupendous energy they display, as we see them applying themselves on every hand to the execution of the great projects which are to render the age

[a] Eph. ii. 3.

illustrious, and to make the earth a comfortable habitation for man in his state of disobedience! (The word "disobedience" in this passage means obstinate rebellion.)

We have here in God's Word (and we get it nowhere else) a satisfactory explanation of the tremendous exertions put forth in the direction of glorifying the age by achievements hitherto unheard of. The energy for these vast projects is supplied by that mighty being who has in this age his supreme opportunity to demonstrate what humanity can achieve under his leadership; for in the age that is soon coming he will not be a prince and god, with his headquarters in the heavenly places, but a fettered captive in the abyss.

The energies of this mighty spirit are one day to have their supreme display in the man who will be the flower of unregenerate humanity, and whose coming will be "after the working (energizing) of Satan, with all power (dynamic force) and signs and lying wonders, and in every deceit of unrighteousness." For the consummate product of Man's day will be the man, Satan's masterpiece, the Antichrist.

"And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he

spake like unto a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed. And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who hath the stroke of the sword and lived."[a] In that day, when God is about to bring forth His Man, "the Son of Man," out of the heavens, Satan brings up his man "out of the earth." Above, it is the Day of Christ. On earth, it is the day of Antichrist.

[a] Rev. xiii. 11–14 (R.V.).

THE TWO CLASSES OF "THINGS"

In speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit in this age, we have had occasion to refer to the things in which He is seeking to enlist the interest of believers. Also in discussing the occupation of the god of this age, we have had more or less to say about his things. It will be profitable, in concluding this part of our subject, to bring to mind some passages of Scripture in which the two classes of things are contrasted.

The "Things of God" and the "Things of the World"

In 1 Cor. ii. we read of "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," and which He has revealed to us by His Spirit; of the "things of God"; of "spiritual things"; and of "the things of the Spirit of God." Our Lord, in His last conversations on earth with His disciples, spoke with them of "the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."[a] We read of Apollos, that he "taught

[a] Acts i. 3.

diligently the things of the Lord,"[a] and of Paul that he disputed and persuaded "the things concerning the Kingdom of God."[b]

On the other hand, we are warned not to love "the things that are in the world."[c]

Between these two great classes of things, there is just as clear and sharp a line of division as between the two spirits who are now working in the earth, and between the two classes of people ("children of God" and "children of disobedience") through whom they are respectively working. It is plainly not in accordance with the mind of God that there should be any admixture of these two distinct classes of things.

"All Seek their own Things"

Paul, writing to the Philippians, speaks of sending Timothy to them shortly, saying: "For I have no man likeminded who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."[d] Seeking one's own things instead of the things of Christ is a great hindrance

[a] Acts xviii. 25.
[b] Acts xix. 8.
[c] 1 John ii. 15.
[d] Phil. ii. 20, 21.

in the ministry. God cannot send such to tend His sheep. This spirit of seeking one's own things is manifest in childhood. At a very early age the child begins to seek his own things, and will snatch them from the fingers of playmates; he cannot bear to see them in the hands of another. And this spirit develops with age. How much need there is that the believer should be instructed as to the precious things of Christ—"the things that are freely given us of God." Without that instruction he is apt to adopt, and to act upon, the principle that a man's life consists in "the abundance of the things that he possesseth." [a]

"Who mind Earthly Things"

In the next chapter [b] Paul speaks sadly of the walk of those who "mind earthly things," saying: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Paul is here exhorting believers not to follow these in minding

[a] Luke xii. 15. [b] Phil. iii. 19.

earthly things, but to follow *him* in pressing "towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Evidently, then, there is a danger that believers may, if they are not watchful, be found following after those whose minds are upon earthly things, and who are therefore "the enemies of the cross of Christ." This is a striking expression. It does not speak of enemies of *Christ*, but of enemies of the *cross* of Christ; thus forcibly reminding us of the effect of the cross of Christ upon our relation with earthly things; reminding us that we have been crucified with Christ, and that "God has quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." [a] How, then, shall we follow the example of those who mind earthly things? Let us not be found following those whose glory is in their shame, when our glory is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, "by whom the world has been crucified unto us, and we unto the world." [b]

[a] Eph. ii. 5, 6.

[b] Gal. vi. 14.

"Things of the Flesh" and "Things of the Spirit"

In Rom. viii. 5 the distinction is made between "things of the flesh" and "things of the spirit." "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit." And the difference between the minding of these two classes of things is the difference between death and life. "For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the spirit is life and peace" (verse 6, R.V.). The "things of the flesh" (that is, things which appeal to the nature that we have from Adam) may be very attractive, very pleasing, very beautiful. But lovely works of art and beautiful music do not feed the new man, or tend in the least to bring Christ to the contemplation of the soul. On the contrary, they tend to shut Him out. They that are after the flesh turn their minds to things of the flesh, things which require no new birth, no knowledge of Christ for their appreciation and enjoyment. Products of the flesh—that is, of unquickened souls—appeal to those who are after the flesh. We need to be repeatedly reminded of our Lord's words, "that which is born of the flesh is

flesh."[a] These "things of the flesh" also appeal to the old nature in the believer; and hence the repeated warnings of Scripture with reference to the desires of our natural hearts. The Word of God does not classify the things of the flesh, making some allowable and some not. It does not say that we are to indulge some of the tastes and desires of the old nature, and to restrain others. On the contrary, we are bidden to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the (any) desires thereof.[b]

The "Things which are Seen" and the "Things which are not Seen"

In 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, the distinction is made between "the things which are seen" and "the things which are not seen." The passage reads: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

[a] John iii. 6. [b] Rom. xiii. 14.

It is a question here of what we are looking at. This concerns especially the periods of our distresses, persecutions, and sufferings here on earth; and what is involved is nothing less than our weight of eternal glory. If we are following with our inward eyes the direction in which the Holy Spirit is pointing, then we are looking at "the things which are not seen," the things "which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," but which "God hath prepared for them that love Him." We are in that case looking at Him "whom having not seen we love"; [a] and we shall therefore be like Moses, who "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." [b] It is while we are thus occupied with the unseen things that the trials and persecutions of which the Apostle is speaking, even though their severity be such that we are being "alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake," will seem only "a light affliction which is but for a moment." This is exceedingly practical and important; and we would only add that the habit of contemplating the things that are not seen must be acquired while the opportunity offers. It will not do to wait until the troubles come, and then expect in a moment to arouse

[a] 1 Pet. i. 8. [b] Heb. xi. 27.

an interest in the invisible things, if, during our untroubled seasons, we have been looking at, and developing an interest in, "the things that are seen."

Furthermore, it is while we are looking at the unseen and eternal things that our present and temporary affliction works out for us an exceeding surpassing and eternal weight of glory. Afflictions which overtake those believers (for this applies to believers only) who are occupied with the things about them, are not only (and for that very reason) well-nigh insupportable, but they work no eternal profit. If, however, we habitually look, not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen, then, when affliction overtakes us, the effect will be, (1) that though it be severe and protracted, it will seem but light and momentary, and (2) that it will work out for us an exceeding and surpassing weight of glory which will be eternal.

This is the principle which explains the joy of the martyrs when enduring what would be, under ordinary conditions, excruciating agonies. They were looking at "the things that are not seen," and hence were able, not only to endure the most cruel tortures that malignant ingenuity could devise, but

while so doing, to give unmistakable evidences of rejoicing in their unseen Lord.

Looking at unseen things is pre-eminently an exercise of faith; and this is the victory that overcometh the world.[a] For faith is "the evidence of things not seen."[b] The word here rendered "evidence" means also "conviction"; and really signifies evidence such, in character and amount, as carries thorough conviction. Again, we read that faith is the result of hearing what God says. "So then faith (cometh) by hearing, and hearing by the Word."[c] The meaning of this is very plain. Faith is believing what God says; hence, to have faith, we must hear the Word of God. Conviction as to unseen things based on anything else, whether it be the traditions of men or the teachings of a Church, is not faith, but credulity and superstition. Man's word may produce conviction; but that conviction is not faith, which needs a surer support. God's Word, being the highest kind of testimony, produces thorough conviction regarding unseen things, and conviction so produced is Faith.

So then, if we would obtain the unspeakable benefits of looking not "at the things that are seen,"

[a] 1 John v. 4. [b] Heb. xi. 1. [c] Rom. x. 17.

but "at the things that are not seen," we must have faith (for faith is not seeing, but hearing); and in order to have faith we must hear the testimony of the Spirit of God in His Word. "He that hath an ear, let him hear." "And unto you that hear shall more be given."[a]

"Things Above" and "Things on the Earth"

In Col. iii. 2 the distinction is made between "things above" and "things on the earth." The truth on which the exhortation of that verse is based is given in the preceding chapter, verse 12. "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead" (R.V.). This statement is the testimony of God. The believer, hearing it and believing it, realizes his identification with Christ raised from among the dead. What will he do under the influence of this truth? Listen: "If ye then were raised together with Christ" (and if not, you are not a believer) "seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand

[a] Mark iv. 24.

of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth." [a]

This passage shows that the soul which has been quickened with Christ and raised with Him from among the dead, has the power of choice between things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God, and where God's thoughts are for this age, and things that are on the earth, where the principalities, powers, and world-rulers of this darkness [b] are operating. Hence the responsibility for the results of his choice rests upon him. As those whom the Son has made free, we are "free indeed"; [c] so free that we can, if we will, cease from seeking earthly things and seek the things that are above, where He is, and can set our minds—that is, fix and stay them—upon things above, not on things upon the earth.

Attention to this and other scriptures which we are considering would save believers much of the loss which they incur by questioning whether this or that thing is proper for a child of God. One's whole time could be taken up by such questionings, and in giving ear to the plausible reasons which are urged to commend "things on the earth" to the regard of

[a] Col. iii. 1, 2 (R.V.). [b] Eph. vi. 12. [c] John viii. 36.

believers. The Scriptures cut short all such questions. Again, there is in this passage no attempt to sort out some things on the earth as suitable to engage the minds of God's children. The word is "not on things (whatever their apparent worthiness) upon the earth."

It is instructive to observe that the particular earthly things mentioned in the context[a] are not impure or vicious things, but include religious ordinances, and doctrines and precepts of men which have a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility, but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh. Among "the things that are on the earth" there are none better calculated than religious observances devised by man, to disguise the real character of the world, and to turn the mind away from the person of Christ and the place where He now is, at the right hand of God.

The "Things that are Behind" and the "Things that are Before"

In Philippians iii. 13, 14, we have a distinction between "the things that are behind" and "the

[a] Col. ii. 16–23.

things that are before." The Apostle says: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The things which the Apostle here left behind were those that are held in highest esteem by the heart of man. They were not the ills and misfortunes, the follies and mistakes, the failures and shortcomings, the transgressions and wicked deeds of his life, that the Apostle was leaving behind and forgetting. Far from it. They were all that he had to pride himself upon before he found Christ, or rather was found by Him. They were his birth, his nationality, his pedigree, his religious zeal, his ecclesiastical denomination, his performance of all religious rites, and, above all, his righteous life and his blamelessness under the law. "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (verses 5, 6).

Why did he turn his back on all these things, counting them but refuse, and determining to forget

them? It was because his gaze had been drawn toward the unseen things, toward the things above, toward heaven, whence he was looking "for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile bodies that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (verses 20, 21).

If, therefore, we truly believe God's testimony, and understand by faith that we have a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, now at the right hand of God, and who is coming out of heaven to change these bodies of our humiliation, fashioning them like the body of His glory, we will turn from and forget the best of earthly things, counting them as refuse; and reaching forth unto those things that are before, we will press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This passage is expressive of the intensest eagerness, and indicates a condition of soul which is possible to all believers, but only experienced by those who have fully accepted what God has said about the things to come, and who are living in daily expectation of them.

"Old Things are passed away"

In 2 Cor. v. 17 the distinction is made between "old things" and "new things."

"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (or new creation): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ."

This passage, like those already considered, presents clearly the fact that there can be, in God's plan, no commingling of these two classes of things. We are not left to use our own judgment as to what things of the old life can be imported into the new. Faith does not question or discuss such matters, or try to find something good in what God has pronounced evil. It seeks only to know what God has said, and His word settles every question. If a man be in Christ, he has not merely improved his old state, eliminating the bad things and importing some new things; he has been taken out of the old state altogether, and put into a new state, where all things are new, and all things are of God. It is a new creation. In the old creation there were things of the world, things of the flesh, things of the Devil.

To the man in Christ all these old things are passed away. There was nothing in the whole system that God would accept. Of the grandest, noblest, most beautiful works of man, and of man's day, not a single one will survive into the new creation.

And in God's sight that new creation is not something to be called into existence in the future. It exists now, and everyone who is "in Christ" is already a part of it. True, that new creation is not yet revealed in all its completeness. Neither was the old creation manifested in its completeness on the fourth day. But it was nevertheless in existence. Furthermore, we can even now look by faith to the very end of God's plan in the new creation, "He having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one ALL THINGS IN CHRIST, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him."[a]

And this new creation "in Christ" not only surpasses in glory and beauty the old creation which it replaces, but is a creation in which death and sorrow and pain cannot enter[b] as they entered into

[a] Eph. i. 9, 10. [b] Rev. xxi. 4.

the old; because these are the results of sin, and this new creation is in Him who died unto sin once for all, who through death has overcome death, and whom God has raised from the dead. Sin and death can touch nothing that is in this new creation, because it is all "in Christ," who has met and vanquished these enemies, and put them under His feet for the ages of the ages; for "Christ, BEING RAISED FROM THE DEAD, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once (for all); but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God."[a]

"Things to Come"

Our Lord promised of the Spirit of Truth that "He will show you things to come."[b] These are the new, imperishable, and incorruptible things on which the Spirit desires to fix our interests. The promise has been fulfilled. The things to come, such good things as pass man's understanding, have been shown to us in the prophetic writings which the Holy Spirit has inspired. Having been shown these "things to come," the "new things," "the things that are

[a] Rom. vi. 9, 10. [b] John xvi. 13.

above," "the things that are before," we are under a great responsibility. And what eternal loss we must suffer if we neglect them for the "earthly things," "the old things," "the things that are behind"! Believer, you have been taken out of the old creation upon which the fire is about to descend. "Remember Lot's wife."[a]

"Things that cannot be Shaken"

In Heb. xii. 26, 27 we have the last of these contrasts, and very appropriately the distinction is made between "things that are (or can be) shaken," and "things that cannot be shaken."

"Whose voice then shook the earth: but now hath He promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that may be shaken (marg.) as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain."

For "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt

[a] Luke xvii. 32.

with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." [a]

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved (shaken), let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire." [b]

Such is the testimony of the Scriptures concerning "the things that are freely given to us of God." And in order that we may get to know them, we have received the Spirit of God. His part is to show them to us; our part is simply to hear and to believe. These things are all in Christ, "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." [c] So that the testimony of the Spirit is all about Christ; and the things which the Spirit has to show are all the things of Christ. To this agree the words of our Lord when He said, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine." [d]

[a] 2 Pet. iii. 10.
[b] Heb. xii. 28, 29.
[c] Col. i. 19.
[d] John xvi. 14, 15.

Where the Things of Christ are to be Found

But where do we find this testimony of the Spirit concerning Christ, and the things of Christ? In the Scriptures. For Christ is the subject of the Bible: not of the New Testament only, but of the Old Testament also. When He said of the Scriptures "they are they which testify of Me,"[a] the New Testament Scriptures did not exist. Again He said, speaking of Moses: "For he wrote of Me." Christ was the subject of Moses' writings, and our effort has been, in the first part of this volume, to make this important fact plain. If we do not know the Old Testament, we do not know what God has revealed concerning His Son. Therefore His enemy has spared no effort to divert the attention of the people from the Scriptures. He has managed to keep the great mass of men in unbelief concerning them. Others he has persuaded that the Scriptures are too hard to be understood; as if our Father could not make His children understand His Word, and as if He had not made the way of salvation so plain that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." On this pretext the children's food is

[a] John v. 39.

taken away from them, notwithstanding the admonition of the Spirit through the Apostle Peter to young believers: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious";[a] and notwithstanding Paul's reminder to Timothy: "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."[b] It is important to note that there is no question here as to the ability of the reader. The result does not depend upon what *he* is able to do, but upon what the Holy Scriptures are able to do; and they are able to make the one who reads in faith, wise unto salvation.

Others have, through the devices of the enemy of Christ, "become vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind"[c] and deceived into the great folly and presumption of thinking that by their superior penetration and learning they have discovered the presence of errors, interpolations, discrepancies, legends, myths, and so forth, in the Scriptures, thus effectually preventing faith by raising questions of authenticity. Instead of "And God said," we hear the question (which is

[a] 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. [b] 2 Tim. iii. 15. [c] Col. ii. 18.

traceable directly back to the garden of Eden) "Yea, and hath God said?" Here is where the disobedience occurred whereby "many were made sinners"; [a] and the same spirit is still working by the same device in "the children of disobedience."

Others, again, he has successfully diverted from the study of the Scriptures by bringing forward other things to occupy their minds. And so, through one device and another, the things of Christ are neglected; and, notwithstanding the presence in the earth of the written Word and the Holy Spirit, God is saying, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." [b]

The things concerning Christ are in all the Scriptures; and if we are ignorant of them, we are without excuse, for "the Word is very nigh unto thee." [c]

If, then, we would enter into what God is doing in this age, namely, (1) glorifying His Son whom He has exalted to His own right hand "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion," [d] "by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, by Him, whether things in earth or things in heaven"; [e] (2) forming the Church "which is His body, the

[a] Rom. v. 19. [b] Hos. iv. 6. [c] Deut. xxx. 14.
[d] Eph. i. 21. [e] Col. i. 20.

fulness of Him that filleth all in all";[a] and (3) quickening individual souls together with Christ, and exalting them to the heavens with Him[b]—we must study diligently and prayerfully, and with believing hearts, the revelation which God, in His infinite grace, has given us.

Yes, the things concerning Christ are in all the Scriptures, and are accessible to all who believe God. Not in some of the Scriptures only, but in all. This is the lesson of the walk to Emmaus on the day of His resurrection, which is recorded for us in Luke xxiv. The explanation of the state of those two disciples was, not difficulty in understanding the Scriptures, but slowness of heart to believe them. The trouble was not in the head, but, as is always the case, in the heart. And so His reproof to them was: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (25).

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in ALL the Scriptures the THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF" (27).

[a] Eph. i. 23. [b] Eph. ii. 5–7.

[Man's day is drawing

CONCLUSION

Man's day is drawing to a close. The sum of its achievements is nearly complete. Man's efforts to procure happiness, peace, and righteousness, apart from Christ, have been permitted to continue through many centuries until their failure has been fully demonstrated. The "day of Christ"[a] approaches for those who have believed God's Word and received His Son. The "Day of the Lord, that great and terrible day" approaches for those who have rejected Him: "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."[b]

Let us, therefore, "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised); and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see THE DAY APPROACHING."[c]

[a] Phil. ii. 16. [b] 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.
[c] Heb. x. 23, 24, 25.

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